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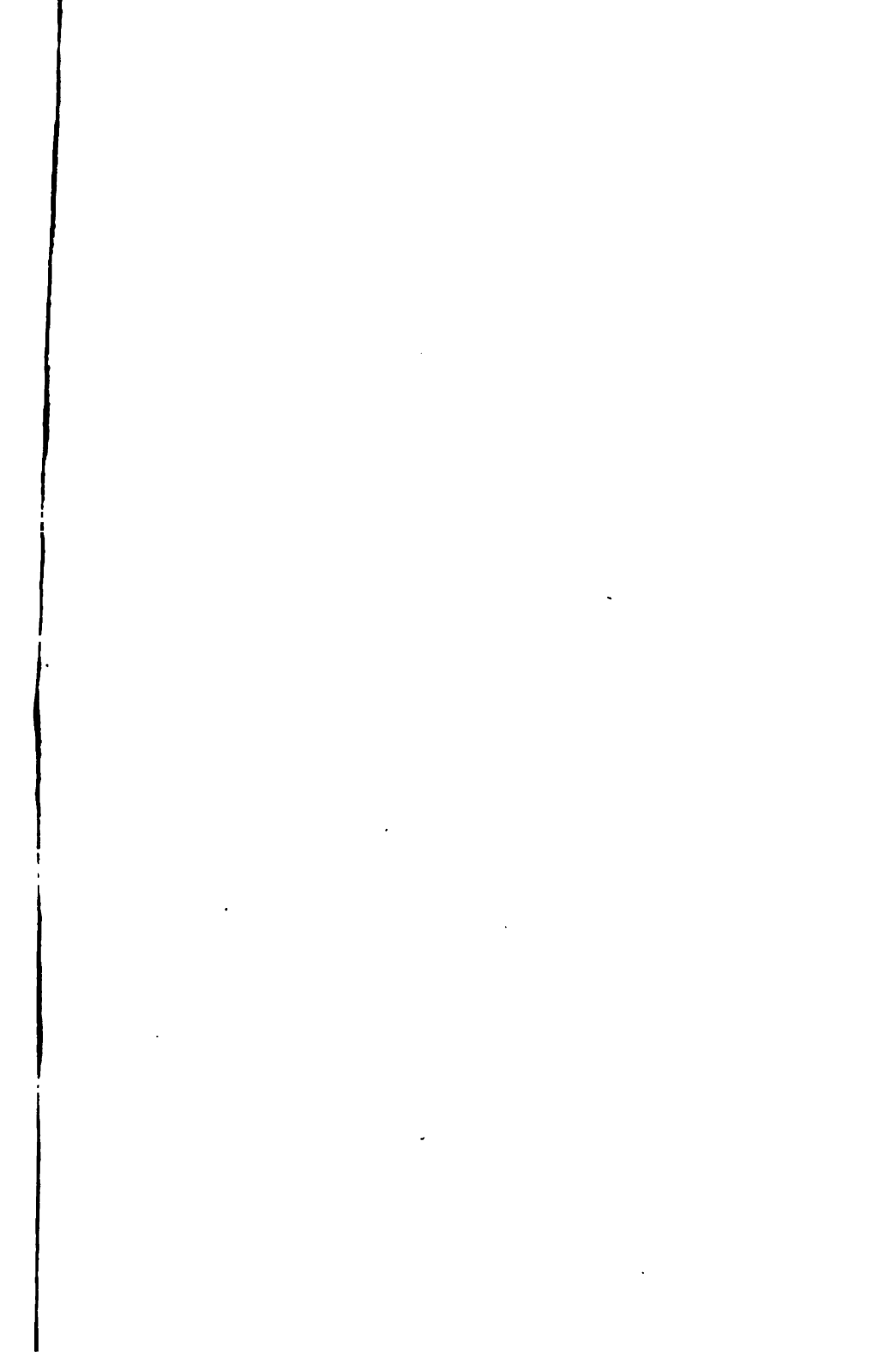
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**SIXTY YEARS' LIFE AND ADVENTURE
IN THE FAR EAST**

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California

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AMERICAN



Photo by Theodore Grosse.

Ernest Dill Ross

SIXTY YEARS : Life and Adventure in the Far East - -

BY
JOHN DILL ROSS

*With 25 Illustrations
including 3 Photogravure Plates and a Map*

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VOLUME II

CHAPTER XXIII

THE DOWNFALL OF NORTHWOOD AND SON

NORTHWOOD drove to his office on that fatal Tuesday morning, just as he had driven so many hundred times before, and took his seat at his desk, on which the usual telegrams and letters were displayed. He glanced carelessly over them. The day had passed when letters or telegrams from London or Liverpool were of much interest. Busoni bent an inquiring glance, which his chief met with a brief shake of the head. Northwood had failed to find a way out during the night.

It was evident that something had got abroad about Northwood and Son's position, for everyone to whom they happened to owe any money was represented by a bill-collector howling for instant payment. At length, by dint of cuffing and kicking a particularly persistent beast of this sort down his long office stairs, Johnnie managed to restore order in his premises.

His next step was to send Busoni round to see Arbuthnot. Busoni came back with the news that Arbuthnot was not to be shaken in his attitude. He would advance no more money. As to the way out of the difficulty by

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getting advances from another bank, Arbuthnot was quite willing to approve such a transaction, always provided that Northwood and Son would sign a bond in which they agreed to find specific security for one hundred and twenty thousand dollars within thirty days from date of signature.

Busoni was eager for the acceptance of Arbuthnot's terms, which implied the greatest confidence in the honour of Northwood and Son. It was a way out, of course, but it had its drawbacks. Johnnie had no moral right to sign such a bond. No doubt Arbuthnot calculated on Captain Northwood's landed property in Singapore as being sufficient security; the Northwood properties lay right and left for that matter, and were of immense value.

Johnnie felt that he could no longer ask a favour from any man living. He was humbled to the dust. What lay before him in the shape of insult, reproach and calumny he knew not. He made up his mind to accept the worst, but he would beg no more.

After his conversation with Busoni, the first question which occurred to him was: "How does a firm suspend payment?" The unfortunate man had never contemplated such a crisis, and had not the faintest idea of how to deal with it. However, this particular part of the business was made just as easy for Johnnie Northwood as it was for the young lady who inquired of her doctor how she should know when she was seasick on the occasion of her first trip across the Channel. A stormy passage settled the point for the pair of them.

Armstrong, Ogilvie and Co. made it rough for Johnnie Northwood, and gave him his first experience of commercial seasickness. It was one of the wealthiest and most influential houses in the place, whose senior partner sat on the Legislative Council apparently as a matter of right. Their dockyard had been managed for a very long time by Mr. Whitfield, a particular friend of Captain Northwood's, who had faithfully and persistently given all

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his docking business to Armstrong, Ogilvie and Co. for more than thirty years.

The firm was at the time under the management of no less a personage than the Honorable William Anstruther Ogilvie, M.L.C. He was a Scotsman, of course, and a very fine specimen of the strong, capable, hard-fisted type who start without even the legendary half-crown and who die wealthy and respected.

Ogilvie had an especial dislike for people who owed his firm any money. To his mind they appeared as a sort of horrid phenomenon, a deadly contagion to be battled with and suppressed at the very earliest moment.

The instant he heard that Northwood and Son were in difficulties, it occurred to him that they owed his firm money almost to a certainty. Yes, there it was! They owed three thousand five hundred and one dollars fifty cents for the *Alastor's* last dock bill. He sent his Chinese cashier round with it, and with instructions not to return without the money. Johnnie Northwood kicked him downstairs, and the discomfited cashier had perforce to return empty-handed to tell the story of his defeat.

Ogilvie was of opinion that the violence offered to his cashier was a favourable symptom.

"Don't tell me that Northwood hasn't any money! He wouldn't kick our cashier downstairs if he was really in trouble. He's only humbugging and we'll *make* him pay!"

Thereupon he wrote a very curt note to Northwood, demanding instant payment of his bill, and told his messenger not to return without an answer. The man came back with the news that the Tuan *suda katáva*, that he had *laughed* as he tore up the note, and that Northwood's head tamby, who was a very powerful man, had pushed him downstairs and called him one of the pig tribe.

Ogilvie thereupon sent for Whitfield, and ordered him

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to "shake the money out of young Northwood." Whitfield evidently did not like the job.

"You don't mean to say that you're *afraid* of the young ruffian?" cried Ogilvie. "Tell him from me that if he flings you downstairs or offers you any violence at all, I'll come round myself and bring a police-inspector with me. Of course, if you think you can get the money easier by letting him knock you about a bit, don't let that stand in the way of business. Persuade him that it's his duty to pay *us*, if he pays nobody else, and bring the money back with you."

Poor Whitfield presented himself to Northwood, hat in hand, and so humble and apologetic that he hardly seemed to be the same hearty, friendly creature who used to come into the office with his cheery: "Good morning, Mr. John! Glad to see you looking so fit!" or something of the kind.

"Sit down, Whitfield! Always glad to see you. What's the matter? Not ill, I hope?"

Whitfield sat on the edge of the proffered chair and began to mumble something about Mr. Ogilvie and a dock bill. Northwood objected that the bill was quite a new one and could well afford to wait a little. Why this haste? Surely after an account had been running to everyone's satisfaction for thirty years this particular bill for quite a small amount need not be collected at the point of the bayonet. Whitfield, more distressed than ever, pleaded his special orders from Ogilvie.

Johnnie Northwood thought the thing over for a minute.

"My dear Whitfield," he said, "I don't see why you should be worried about matters which don't concern you in the least. We are in trouble and I expect to stop payment to-day, but that is no business of yours. If you like I'll go round with you and have it out with Ogilvie myself. I'm riding for a fall and may as well have it now!"

Whitfield's face cleared as he said: "If you would be

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so kind, Mr. John. I am awful sorry for you, sir, and for that fine man your father! But I'm thinkin' ye'll pull through. Most people think that way. As for this little dock bill, I can't understand why Mr. Ogilvie makes such a trouble about it. But you know his way, Mr. John. His bark's worse than his bite, anyway."

The two men started for Armstrong, Ogilvie's office. As they reached Collyer Quay they happened to meet John Grinston, who showed his teeth in a monstrous grin and ended by exploding in a hearty peal of unaffected laughter. Mr. William Wapshot, who happened to be standing in Brownlow's archway, winked one eye portentously, and said: "Hullo!" in a rich bass voice. Various other people eyed them with great curiosity, and amid these manifestations of public interest they reached their destination.

Mr. Ogilvie, being deeply engaged in the construction of a cipher telegram, begged them to be seated, and resumed his work. Johnnie took a chair, but Whitfield disappeared mysteriously. Evidently he had no stomach for the impending battle.

Ogilvie being at last free to attend to Northwood, pushed his chair back and gazed hard at his visitor. Decidedly Ogilvie looked his part. His clear-cut features, his cold blue eyes, his high bald forehead, together with a certain dominating manner, proclaimed the strong, successful man bent on carrying his point, whatever it might be.

"Now, Mr. Northwood, what's this nonsense about our dock bill? You know perfectly well that you will pay it!"

"Unfortunately, Mr. Ogilvie, my bankers refuse to honour my cheques, and I certainly don't care to sign a cheque unless I am certain it will be paid. I may possibly be able to settle your dock bill later, but for the moment I can do nothing. I cannot even make you a definite promise of any kind."

Ogilvie went white with rage; he leaned forward in

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his chair as he brought his fist down with a thump on his desk. He was an excellent hand at making a speech when he was roused. Was he not the leader of the unofficial minority in the Legislative Council and the terror of the Governor in Council and his executive? In a clear, penetrating voice he said :

" Mr. Northwood, do not think for one moment that I shall allow you to avoid the payment of your just debt to me so easily. Your story about your bankers may or may not be true. That doesn't concern me in the slightest. I happen to know that a certain bank offered to lend you fifty thousand dollars yesterday, and that you refused the money. I know for a fact that your Chinese cashiers are collecting money as fast as they can and handing it to you. I know for a fact that you can pay me ten times over if you wish to do so, and it is my business to compel you to pay me. What your present game is Heaven forbid that I should so much as attempt to understand. We all know that you are given to upsetting markets, and cornering supplies. You may have some deep scheme in hand in acting a part and telling me you have no money. But you have it and you know you have, and you will pay *me*, Mr. Northwood, or I shall know the reason why! You are very clever, and you may think you have kept yourself on the windy side of the law, but if you defraud me of one cent of my just due, I will spare no expense to have you punished like your friend Lewis Wallis. Now will you pay me or not ? "

" *No! Certainly not!* " thundered Northwood, exasperated beyond all endurance. " I have never been anywhere near a bankruptcy court and know nothing of the beastly proceedings in bankruptcy, but my common sense tells me that it's fraudulent to pay one creditor unless I pay all, and that I cannot do for the moment. You must take your chance with the rest! If you think you can bully me into such a transaction you are vastly mistaken. You'll send me to jail, will you? What about yourself?

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You have had my father's account for thirty years or more, and made money out of it all the time, and now you are trying to terrify me over a miserable balance equal to some five hundred pounds. Shame on you, Ogilvie ! ”

Here Northwood sprang to his feet in uncontrollable excitement, and overturning his chair, made as if he would strike Ogilvie. Various clerks rushed in, and there was great scandal and excitement. The only man who was now perfectly cool was Ogilvie himself, who sat quietly in his chair. Waving everyone away with a long, lean hand, he said very tranquilly : “ That will do, Mr. Northwood ! I shall now put the matter in the hands of my solicitors.”

“ Hang your solicitors ! ” roared Northwood, as he stormed out of the office. The poor lad was unused to insults of any kind, and Ogilvie had treated him to a full measure.

It seemed to Northwood, who next called on Arbuthnot, that, having been already steeped up to his very lips in shame at the outset of his difficulties, he had better get through with his bitter task and find out whether Arbuthnot would also talk of solicitors and Singapore jail.

To his surprise he found Arbuthnot in quite a placid frame of mind. He listened with much interest to the story of the recent trouble with Ogilvie. He said that Northwood was quite right in refusing to pay Ogilvie, and told him not to give another thought to threats of solicitors and jail.

“ Ogilvie was only playing with you ! ” said the banker pleasantly. “ He's really a first-class man, and he knows better than anyone else that you met him the right way, and he will like you all the better for it. I'll just have a chat with him about it next time I meet him at the club.”

Northwood wanted some assistance in getting out his

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balance-sheet. Arbuthnot suggested that he knew a certain broker, who was reputed to be very clever at accounts, but Northwood interrupted him: "What! Tony's Uncle? No, thank you! I've had quite enough of that gentleman's services already!"

The banker coloured slightly as he fidgeted in his chair, and said rather irritably: "Well, what do you want?"

Northwood said he wanted someone from the bank itself to supervise Arratoon and his staff while they got out their balance-sheet. The bank was glad enough to assist in getting out the Northwood balance-sheet some four years ago. Why not now, when it was of even more importance?

Arbuthnot soon recognized that it was a useful idea, and said that although it was a nuisance, he would give him Stubbs, his accountant. It was further decided that Northwood should again sign cheques for such amounts as were necessary for carrying on the work of the offices and godowns.

That evening Johnnie had to tell his mother about the downfall of Northwood and Son. The poor lady took it very quietly. She said: "We shall have to leave Woodleigh, I suppose; but the place is my own, isn't it, Johnnie?"

"Yes, it's your own property, but it's an expensive place to keep up, and I see no prospect of our being able to maintain it. Indeed, we had better see about dismissing some of the servants and gardeners to-morrow."

Poor Mrs. Northwood kissed her son and went to her bedroom to give way to her tears unseen.

Johnnie sat in a corner of the great front verandah, feeling very miserable and unhappy. His outlook was as black as the night. But through it he presently discerned two points of light gradually approaching. The creaking on the gravel betrayed the approach of a gharry, which presently rolled under the portico, when a voice shouted: "Are you there, Johnnie?"

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"Yes!" was the reply. "But who comes to the House of Ruin?"

"A friend!" answered Melville, as he shook hands with Johnnie, who had advanced to meet him.

"Well! To Alexander Melville belongs the distinction of being the only man in Singapore who has the courage to call on Johnnie Northwood! Come along; make yourself comfortable and tell me what people say about me."

"They say all sorts of things! Some people say you will be all right again directly your father gets back, others say you are such a desperate gambler that you have ruined your firm beyond redemption, and that a warrant for your arrest will be out to-morrow morning!"

The two men consulted each other for a long time concerning the firm's position, which Melville found to be much stronger than he thought possible. All now seemed to depend upon Captain Northwood. If he brought back the *Martaban* with a valuable cargo, and if, above all, he would fight with anything like the skill and courage with which he fought the sago crisis, he might still save the firm of Northwood and Son.

Meanwhile, the weary days pending his father's return were a period of agony for young Northwood, and sleepless nights prolonged his torture. He showed himself as little as possible, and had completely lost his confident and erect bearing. When he was compelled to go out on his mournful business, he slunk, pale and dispirited, through the streets, taking no notice of the few who greeted him. He felt like an abject criminal. None save the faithful Alexander Melville came near Woodleigh now. Hand in hand with his mother he would wander through the lovely grounds, gazing eagerly on the scenes of so much past happiness. The place was already losing some of its beauty. The riotous tropical growth of all sorts of weeds went on unchecked. The

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thirty gardeners had all been dismissed. The house itself looked neglected. Nearly all the servants had gone.

Johnnie Northwood remained in charge of his office, realizing the stocks of produce in the godowns and signing cheques for such expenditure as was absolutely necessary. Stubbs, a stoutly-built man, with a fine, slightly bald head, set off by a full beard, came every day to superintend Arratoon and his clerks. Stubbs made a special point of going into young Northwood's personal expenditure, and found, to his surprise, that it was less than that of an ordinary clerk. The more searching the inquiry into the firm's accounts, the better they looked. Arratoon was foolish and indiscreet, but he was a splendid accountant, who kept his books in beautiful order, so that the work of getting out the balance-sheet was much facilitated.

Meantime, Johnnie had sent a short letter by a Dutch steamer to Macassar, in which he advised his father of the disaster which had overtaken them. It was thought probable that Captain Northwood would return *viâ* Macassar. The departure of a Dutch gunboat for Amboina direct gave him an unexpected opportunity of communicating with Shelby. He urged Shelby to come to Singapore by the first chance, and, above all, to reship the specie, which would do more than anything else to save the firm.

There was, of course, some hope of this being done, but the credit and reputation of the Northwoods were already shattered. They might get through the crisis, but they would at the best emerge from it crippled and sorely weakened, condemned to a life of retrenchment and economies for a long period.

On the morning when the *Martaban* was at last signalled Johnnie went on board to meet his father and saw at a glance that the letter posted to Macassar had reached him.

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"It's all up, Johnnie!" he said wearily. "I've brought very little back with me. Our cargo is mostly on freight from Macassar. I could have brought back a whole pile of spices with me worth a lot of money by waiting for them, but I did not know, I couldn't even imagine what was taking place here, and what was the good of waiting about with an expensive chartered boat when the *Alastor* was due to arrive just about the time she was wanted?"

The two Northwoods went to their office, when it soon became evident that the senior partner was in no fighting trim. He took no interest whatever in what was being done. When Johnnie tried to arouse some sort of hope in him his father groaned:

"I've told you it's all up! We should be all right, I know, if Shelby would run straight, but you can't expect him to do anything of the kind in a crisis like this! He'll look after himself first and last, and leave us to sink. Very likely he'll make his own fortune out of our ruin, but ruin us he will! I know the man by this time! We shall be lucky indeed if we can get enough money to pay our debts after we've sold up every stick and stone we've got!"

Johnnie had to admit to himself with a heavy heart that his father, with his usual sagacity, had correctly diagnosed the situation. When he talked of Shelby re-shipping the specie his father merely smiled at the very idea of the thing and sank back in his chair as if he were utterly fatigued. It hit the old sailor very hard indeed that his creditors should have to wait for their money. Throughout his long life he had always been accustomed to pay his way cash down, and it seemed inconceivable to him that he should suddenly find himself heavily in debt and saddled with grievous financial responsibilities with which he could not cope.

One thing only consoled him in all his grief, that his son had not signed any bonds or letters of hypothecation.

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He declared that Johnnie had acted quite rightly in stopping when he did, instead of resorting to dangerous expedients to postpone the day of reckoning. "If Lewis Wallis had acted like you," he said, "he would not be in prison to-day, nor would he have dragged us into the sago 'corner' if he had stopped payment when he knew he was insolvent. We could have stood either Lewis Wallis or Shelby, but the pair of them together are enough to shake the Bank of England, let alone Northwood and Son. Well, I suppose we can keep out of jail, but people will say we're a pair of rogues all the same!"

The Captain still further dismantled the Woodleigh establishment. He sold up the stables. The Doctor and Lucy and the two buggy-horses fetched good prices, poor things! Johnnie was surprised to find his mother's carriage and pair of horses ready to take them into town one morning. The coachman, who had had his orders, drove past the office in Battery Road to Powell's Auction Rooms in the Square, where the two men left it. The next day they jingled into town in a dirty gharry.

Shortly afterwards the catalogues were out of the "valuable furniture, cellar of wines, rare plants, etc., the property of Captain John Dillon Northwood," to be sold by public auction.

The Northwoods left their beautiful Woodleigh for a cheap house near town, rented to them for a few dollars a month by a compassionate friend.

In due time the *Alastor* arrived with Captain Shelby on board as a passenger. He had brought quite a valuable cargo with him, but not a solitary coin in specie! It was exactly as Captain Northwood had foreseen. Never did Shelby play his cards better than at this crisis. This fat man, with his unprepossessing face and little pigs'-eyes, had a wonderful way of getting round people and arousing their interest in his schemes. He saw a good deal of Arbuthnot, Ogilvie and others concerned in the affairs of Northwood and Son, and soon discovered that there

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was a strong sympathy for Captain Northwood, and a still stronger feeling against his son.

It was Shelby's game to get the Northwoods out of the Moluccas trade altogether, which he meant to keep to himself. What became of *them* was no concern of his. He managed to increase the feeling against the younger Northwood very considerably. He blamed him, not only for the ruin of everybody connected with him, but accused him of having conducted his share of the Moluccas trade with the grossest incapacity, and thus preventing Shelby from demonstrating its marvellous capacities. He wove a story about Johnnie Northwood and the unhappy Coralie van Swoll, which, discreetly told, had a terribly damaging effect. Bankers and business men do not at all like to hear such stories told about men with whom they do business. The yarn was also linked up skilfully with memories of Laura de Miraflores, Miss Hardy and Mrs. Dashwood. Before the astonished Northwood knew much about the storm which was brewing, he had been gifted with the reputation of being one of the most immoral scoundrels unhung!

The change in temperature was very sudden. By dint of his natural charm Johnnie Northwood had succeeded in getting on vastly improved terms with Arbuthnot and Ogilvie, the two men who could practically decide his fate. Others followed in the wake of Arbuthnot and Ogilvie, and Johnnie found his outlook much improved, with some hope of his being able to pilot Northwood and Son out of their terrible straits, until Shelby and others began to sap his private character. Once this particular form of attack came into play, the indignation of gentlemen who kept a native mistress in Kampong Glam, or who smuggled themselves up the back stairs of a cheap hotel to spend their time with a still cheaper actress, knew no bounds! So this was the private history of John Dillon Northwood, of Northwood and Son!

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The wretched lad was simply drowned under this wave of insinuation and calumny, and deprived of his weapons of attack and defence at the critical moment on which hung the fortunes of Northwood and Son. Not that it mattered so much of what the male gossips of Singapore chattered, but both Arbuthnot and Ogilvie happened to be men of exceedingly rigid ideas, to whom such conduct as that imputed to young Northwood was absolutely abhorrent. They looked upon him henceforth as a profligate masquerading as a business man, whose vicious proclivities had ruined a splendid business. George Carlyle, who knew the smallest details of the Laura de Miraflores affair, and who had fathomed the real nature of Johnnie Northwood, alone doubted the stories which were so freely circulated about his former clerk. But Carlyle was on the point of leaving for England, and besides, it ill-suited his essentially retiring disposition to mix himself up in such a scandalous affair. So he held his peace.

Stubbs and Arratoon having brought out their balance-sheet, it was decided to hold a meeting of the creditors of Northwood and Son at their own offices.

The creditors were few in number—Arbuthnot, Ogilvie, George Carlyle, Smith of the Golconda Company, and two or three others who had sold trifling invoices for goods for which they had not been paid before the crash came. A long table was prepared with pens, pencils and paper in front of each seat. Ogilvie was voted into the chair. The culprits, that is to say Captain Northwood with his son on one side of him and Shelby on the other, were seated at the other end of the table opposite the chairman. The intervening seats were filled by creditors who took no particular interest in the proceedings.

Ogilvie, though one of the smallest creditors present, took a perfervid interest in the meeting, and directed it with a masterly hand from start to finish. Young Northwood wondered in a dull sort of way why the great

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and wealthy Ogilvie should so excite himself over a paltry debt of five hundred pounds, which had been covered scores and scores of times in the course of thirty years by dock bills which his father had not cut down as he should have done. But Ogilvie, a most masterful man, chose to dominate the situation, and it is just possible that wonderful stories of vast profits in the Moluccas trade may have had a certain attraction for him and prompted him to dissect the Northwood business with ulterior motives. But that was Ogilvie's own secret.

The balance-sheet disclosed a very favourable condition of affairs. Allowing for all sorts of losses and depreciations the estate should realize much more than was necessary to pay its creditors in full. An impartial observer might have asked for what particular reason the firm had been wrecked !

Ogilvie, in a clever and convincing speech, summed up the whole situation. He said that the creditors were not as those who mourned without hope. The balance-sheet showed a large surplus, but, nevertheless, he urged his old friend Captain Northwood to put the estate in bankruptcy in his own interest. Captain Northwood's first interest should be to get clear of his liabilities and allow him to make a fresh start in life, free of all encumbrances.

Pointing to the singularly handsome offices in which the creditors of Northwood and Son happened to be sitting, Ogilvie said, that when Captain Northwood kept his office in his pocket he made money at a fabulous rate. As a matter of fact, Captain Northwood's pocket-book, in which he noted his payments and receipts, was legendary in Singapore. Ogilvie traced the ruin of Captain Northwood from the day he allowed his son to take charge of a very difficult and complicated business which he was hopelessly incompetent to manage. With a few savage remarks about the incapacity and immorality of the younger Northwood, Ogilvie proposed putting the estate into bankruptcy.

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No sooner had Ogilvie finished his speech than there was a revolt at the other end of the table.

Oddly enough, neither Captain Northwood nor his son had the remotest idea of proceedings in bankruptcy. Neither of them had ever placed a foot in any court of bankruptcy whatever. If people who owed them money in their prosperous days went into bankruptcy they put the case into the hands of some lawyer or another, and bothered about the thing no more. Captain Northwood for once woke up, and in round language swore that no man living should make him bankrupt while his balance-sheet showed a large surplus.

His son flung himself into the fray and defied the whole meeting to make Northwood and Son bankrupts.

Shelby followed Johnnie Northwood with a quiet tactful speech, in which he reminded his hearers that whatever might be the position of Northwood and Son, the firm of Northwood and Shelby owed not one cent to any soul living. Shelby ended a cool and calculated address by referring to the enormous profits already made in the Moluccas trade, which he unblushingly declared might be vastly increased if the younger Northwood were no longer permitted to exercise a disastrous effect upon the conduct of a business in which he had manifested his inability to the fullest measure. He added that the younger Northwood had made himself so unpopular in the Moluccas Islands by his personal vices as to make him an absolutely impossible person in those regions. With a few complimentary remarks about the sterling character and honour of Captain Northwood contrasted with the conduct of his son, Shelby absolutely declined to hear a single word of bankruptcy in connection with the firm of Northwood and Shelby. He proposed a friendly liquidation and the construction of an entirely new company to carry on the business of Northwood and Shelby in the Moluccas.

The meeting was visibly bothered by the alternatives

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proposed by Ogilvie and Shelby. Somehow the Northwoods dropped out of the running altogether, and Shelby took the leading position.

Captain Northwood then offered to sell immediately all his landed property by auction and to place the proceeds at the disposal of his creditors. This eased the situation to a considerable extent. The unhappy Captain was by no means bankrupt, and the proceeds of his various properties would go far to secure all interests involved.

Finally it was settled that a committee should be appointed to administer the affairs of Northwood and Son and Northwood and Shelby, to consist of Arbuthnot, Ogilvie and Carlyle. Captain Northwood and Shelby were to assist this committee in bringing about the desired result, but young Northwood was to be got rid of immediately and left to do exactly what he pleased with himself, always provided that he attempted no interference with matters which concerned him no longer.

Ogilvie cheerfully remarked that the young gentleman would now find his own level, and discover an entirely new pleasure in having to earn his own living. Johnnie Northwood thereupon left the table without a word and quitted the building never to enter it again. He was an outcast and a pariah.

Captain Northwood reached his shabby home that evening utterly disgusted and broken down. He refused to discuss the events of the day, except to say briefly that Shelby had got the weather gauge of the whole lot of them, committee and all, and would absolutely shatter the whole estate. Meanwhile, he declared that he would attend to no other business except that of selling his landed property as rapidly as possible. In this direction he displayed a feverish energy which resulted in very fine prices being made for the lands and buildings which he threw upon the market.

It appeared that the end was almost in sight. If and when the value of the specie shipped by the *Alastor* was

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returned to Singapore, the Northwood firm would be practically clear of debt.

During this time Johnnie Northwood had a wretched time of it. He spent some of his weary hours in writing for the local press and thus earning a few dollars; but this could not last very long, and he had to make a round of the Singapore offices begging for employment which none would give him.

Grinston offered him a second-class ticket to Australia, the great dumping-ground of the wastrels and undesirables of Singapore, and the unhappy young fellow felt very much like accepting the insulting proposal just to get away from his present surroundings; but his father forbade his doing any such thing.

Mrs. Northwood was feeling the position very acutely. She was a very affectionate, impressionable woman, and the settled gloom which never lifted for a moment from the faces of her husband and son depressed her terribly. The woman always has the worst of it in such cases. Poor Mrs. Northwood had to keep up such a home as she had on an inadequate allowance, Captain Northwood having gone rabid on the point of useless but galling little economies for which there was no occasion. The unhappy lady spent many of her solitary hours in sewing and weeping, and was looking very ill.

The first ray of sunshine to relieve this intolerable gloom was an act of generosity on the part of George Carlyle, who, happening to meet Johnnie Northwood just after Ayer Manis was advertised for sale, remarked that the place would probably fetch very little at public auction, as it had no commercial value, and as it was really a beautiful place to which he knew the Northwoods were much attached, he very kindly offered to buy it in for them and they could repay him this new debt when their affairs got straightened out again. Johnnie accepted the offer most gratefully. True, his father growled something about its being all nonsense and that he didn't want

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Ayer Manis ; but as a matter of fact he wanted it very much indeed. As for Mrs. Northwood, she was simply overjoyed at the news, which filled her with new life and hope. Secretly she had mourned bitterly about Ayer Manis, as about many other things, and really thought she had seen the place for the last time.

Under the pretext that his mother might see what was to be done in the way of renting the coco-nut and fruit trees on the estate, Johnnie got her away from her melancholy surroundings into the sweet sea breezes and beautiful scenery of Ayer Manis. Undoubtedly he thereby saved her from all the horrors of a nervous collapse.

Meanwhile the committee was holding its meetings and coming to momentous if astonishing decisions. Northwood and Shelby attended every meeting, but young Northwood, who was really the mainspring of the whole business, was allowed to hear just as much of what was taking place as his taciturn and disheartened father chose to tell him.

Finally the committee's programme was announced. It was decided that as Brownlow and Co. had a mortgage on the *Brunei*, they should manage the Borneo trade until it was paid off. In the meantime, the Borneo properties were not to be sold, as they were necessary for the conduct of the trade. The *Alastor*, which had been lying idle at her anchors for some time, was to be despatched for the Moluccas. The bank was to advance the funds for loading her with the usual cargo as if nothing had happened. A commission was to sail in the *Alastor* consisting of Northwood, Shelby, Stubbs and Arratoon, to make a final report on the Moluccas trade ; the two latter to conduct a searching examination of the accounts and to establish the actual percentage of profits earned on the capital employed.

In consideration of the fact that Northwood had actively assisted in realizing his various Singapore properties at high prices, and that the debts of his firm had been thereby

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greatly reduced, almost to the point of extinction in fact, an agreement was signed by the committee and the rest of the few remaining creditors releasing him from all responsibility concerning the liabilities of Northwood and Son. Captain Northwood, however, had previously made an assignment of the steamship *Alastor* and all the Borneo property to the committee, so that they had everything belonging to him in their hands. Northwood the younger was entirely ignored in all these arrangements and remained legally liable for the whole of the debts of Northwood and Son.

Johnnie viewed this complicated programme with the greatest alarm and distrust. Surely his father's proper place was on the Borneo coast and not in the Moluccas! Then just as Captain Northwood had by dint of forced sales of his property reduced the bank's loan and other liabilities within a handy compass, the committee were going to borrow more money from the bank to ship yet another cargo to the Moluccas—that is to say, to Shelby. Why were they sending a whole mission to Amboina—surely a cumbrous and expensive way of doing things?

The actual fact happened to be that Shelby had persuaded the committee that rice and petroleum must be scarce and dear in the Moluccas, since the usual supplies were so long detained, while they were unusually cheap and plentiful in Singapore at the time. Northwood suggested making the *Alastor* pay her expenses on freights, and not buying any more cargo until everything was finally liquidated, but Shelby objected that to carry Chinese traders' cargo on freight was to make them a present of the business in the Moluccas Islands, and that once they got into it they would keep it.

There was something to be said from this point of view, and, finally, the perplexed committee decided to spend the money, but to send Captain Northwood to the Moluccas to watch Shelby. Despite the apparent simplicity of Shelby, the committee were beginning to feel

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that there was something hollow and specious about the man, while of Northwood's honesty there could be no shadow of a doubt. It was urgent to have some proper audit of Shelby's books and to find out exactly what profits the trade was actually making, so the committee decided to send Tony Arratoon to Amboina to do this work, and to send Stubbs to see that he was not influenced by Shelby and that he brought out his figures correctly.

This represented what Mrs. Northwood afterwards described as being "a very messy way of doing things," but the committee had made its decision, and accordingly the *Alastor* was loaded as usual, and Captain Northwood sailed with the rest of the mission to Amboina.

Stubbs was the first of the party to return from the Spice Islands. After a comparatively short stay, he came back with the report that Amboina was what he called "a beastly place"; but he handed in some carefully-worked out figures, which demonstrated that the money invested by the Northwoods in the Moluccas trade was being employed at a profit equal to forty per cent. per annum.

But in spite of the brilliant figures produced by Stubbs it became only too clear to Johnnie Northwood that utter confusion and the complete ruin of the Northwood interests would be the inevitable results of the committee's policy. The Moluccas trade demanded the undivided attention of a strong man intimately acquainted with all its details, and could not be managed by a committee of gentlemen at the head of different great concerns, who necessarily had but little time to devote to a side issue. Besides, there was Shelby!

The Borneo trade would inevitably suffer from his father's prolonged absence in a distant region, and might break up and crumble to pieces in a manner of which the committee had no idea. In the latter eventuality all was lost indeed!

Now that it was too late, Johnnie Northwood saw how

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good and sound was Ogilvie's advice, brutal and repellent as it seemed at the moment, to put the estate into the Bankruptcy Court. It was the only way by which equal justice could be done to every creditor, to make Shelby powerless, and to render his ingenious schemes mere impossibilities. Bitterly did he regret the pride which caused Ogilvie's plan to be rejected. What was the real disgrace of going through the Bankruptcy Court on their own petition, as a means of securing the payment of twenty shillings in the pound to every creditor?

Johnnie Northwood was helpless now. He saw that a sea of troubles would overwhelm his unfortunate father sooner or later, and viewed the future with gloomy despair.

CHAPTER XXIV

SEVENTY-FIVE DOLLARS A MONTH

GEORGE CARLYLE, being called to London on urgent business, left Singapore by the P. and O. mail after appointing John Finlay to succeed him as one of the managing partners of Brownlow and Co., and incidentally as one of the members of the Northwood committee.

It so happened that as young Northwood was leaving the office of the *Singapore Free Press*, he met Finlay, who greeted him very kindly. Finlay had always looked on Johnnie as one of his most promising juniors, and now asked him point-blank if he would like once more to take service with Brownlow and Co. Johnnie was so delighted at the idea that Finlay had some difficulty in containing him. The matter would first have to be referred to the head office in London by letter, but the period of waiting could be shortened by means of a telegraphic cipher, such as "Woodleigh," for instance, which would mean that Mr. Jasper McKenzie would allow the thrice unlucky John Dillon Northwood to re-enter the service of Messrs. Brownlow and Co.

Mrs. Northwood, who had returned from Ayer Manis, was delighted with this bit of good news. If the great firm of Brownlow and Co. chose to reinstate her son, who could cast so much as a pebble at him! Johnnie himself felt that it would rehabilitate him in the opinion of Singapore society and effectually close the mouths of his traducers. He ardently desired this appointment, and

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was overjoyed when a month later he got a note from Finlay advising him that the London office had cabled the word "Woodleigh." Finlay requested Johnnie to call upon him at his earliest convenience.

It was with infinite satisfaction that Johnnie Northwood re-entered the once familiar office of Brownlow and Co., and made his way to the desk so long occupied by George Carlyle, but now in the possession of John Finlay, promoted to one of the highest posts in the gift of the great firm.

Finlay, after having invited Isaac Henson to join him, went straight into the business before them. He reminded Johnnie of the vast produce business transacted by Brownlow and Co., and of their huge establishments on the right bank of the Singapore River, in which thousands of men were employed. These godowns until now had been left under the management of Chinese headmen, who, however, had taken advantage of their position to make illicit profits. This was a rapidly growing evil, which had to be checked, and Finlay suggested that as his *protégé* had a long experience of native character, he might do much to reform existing abuses in the three up-river godowns, of which it was proposed that he should take charge the following morning.

Finlay briefly pointed out that certain difficulties, such as the opposition of the headmen and the rebellion of the coolies consequent on such an appointment, were likely to occur, but that it was Northwood's business to exercise sufficient tact and strength to quell all opposition without the slightest interruption of business, under pain of proving himself unequal to the highly responsible post to which he had been appointed.

Isaac Henson said: "If Northwood can't do it nobody can do it!" Then turning to Johnnie he added: "You should never have left us, you fool! But you have been through a lot of trouble since then, and probably you have been taught wisdom in a school of your own seeking.

Seventy-five Dollars a Month

We will give you another chance, and I am sure you will make the most of it."

Thereupon Johnnie was dismissed with a cordial shake of the hand from both Finlay and Henson, who had other and more pressing matters to attend to than the scale of remuneration of Mr. John Dillon Northwood, who, in fact, was himself so far demoralized by his recent disasters as to forget all about his salary himself.

Very early next morning Finlay drove Northwood to the big No. 1 godown, a great brick building, right on the river bank. It was crammed with produce and swarming with natives. Finlay showed him huge piles of sago-flour, gum copal, cloves and nutmegs, with the remark: "You ought to know all about these!" The upper floor was made bright by a skylight which extended nearly the whole length of the building. Here a whole tribe of Chinamen were picking and sorting rattans. "This is a very important part of the business which you will have to learn," said Finlay. "We pay these men at the rate of forty cents per day, and I have reason to think that we pay for a lot of men who only exist on paper. You will have to look strictly into this sort of thing. By the way, here is Tan Hoon Kiat, the head storekeeper of the No. 1 godown."

Hoon Kiat looked what he afterwards turned out to be, a real Chinese gentleman. He was a big man, with a fine, massive head; his features were remarkably good and wore a kindly expression which was evidently natural to the man. He was neatly and expensively dressed, while his manners were nothing short of courtly. Such Chinamen are exceedingly rare in Singapore. Hoon Kiat, for a moment, exhibited considerable surprise when he was informed that Tuan Northwood from that moment took complete charge of all the up-river godowns. However, he recovered himself instantly and said it would give him great pleasure to serve under the orders of the son of Captain Northwood, whom he knew very well.

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The No. 2 godown lay about half a mile further up the river, and was devoted exclusively to pressing and baling gambier, an exceedingly sticky and repulsive-looking tanning material, which Brownlow's shipped in thousands of tons to Europe and America. Gangs of nearly naked Chinese sweated at the clanging pumps of the hydraulic presses, into which great raw lumps of stuff like wet clay were being constantly flung by a stream of coolies. As the bales came out of the presses they were swiftly carried off to be sewn into mats and stacked ready for shipment. Buckets of water were frequently flung over the hydraulic presses to wash them clear of the sticky gambier. The whole place ran in streams of a dirty yellow water and steamed and stewed in a red-hot atmosphere redolent of unsavoury smells.

"You will have to spend all the time you can spare in this godown," Finlay said. "They run an awful lot of rubbish into our gambier, and that is a thing which *must* be stopped. You must learn all about gambier and be quick about it!"

Finlay called up the head storekeeper and told him that Tuan Northwood took immediate charge of the godowns. The headman, a coarse-looking Chinese brute, dressed in nothing but a pair of old blue trousers, opened his eyes and mouth, scratched himself, spat on the floor, and then started cursing his coolies at the top of his raucous voice.

"That fellow wants watching!" said Finlay. "We are thinking about giving him the sack when you've got your men well in hand."

No. 3 godown was still higher up the river, and was used largely for dipping hides into tanks of water treated with some preparation of arsenic. These tanks gave off a filthy smell, while the hides attracted swarms of flies.

"Just look at those hides!" exclaimed Finlay. "Just look at the old fold-marks, and some of them are half rotten! No wonder we get claims on our shipments!"

Seventy-five Dollars a Month

You must spend all the time you can spare up here and put a stop to this kind of thing ! ”

The rest of the building was filled with hundreds of tons of black pepper in sacks, which were sweating moisture and throwing off a pungent odour, which combined with the stench of the hides in a combination overpowering enough to discompose the strongest mortal. The heat of the place was something infernal.

“ This pepper,” quoth Finlay, “ is simply loaded up with water. Look how it’s fermenting and sweating ! You’ll have to put a stop to this kind of thing at once ! ”

Then Finlay turned very pale and moved towards the doorway. He had had about enough of it. However he controlled himself sufficiently to notify Tuan Northwood’s appointment to the head storekeeper of No. 3 godown, who received the news with the unmoved stolid indifference of which both Chinese and Japanese have the secret, and which is so irritating to Europeans. It is what the Malays call the *muka papan*, or “ wooden face,” a form of impertinence hard to beat, though it leaves the insulted white man without any tangible cause of complaint. “ That fellow is a ruffian ! ” ejaculated Finlay, as he made a bolt for his carriage.

Finlay drove Johnnie back to the No. 1 godown and left him there. “ Make your own arrangements about your office,” he said on parting ; “ in fact, you must make your own arrangements about everything. I want to see as little of you as possible, because I have so many other people to see and so many things to do. I think you have a talent for organization, and it won’t be long before I know whether I’m right or wrong about you. Good-bye ! ”

Johnnie Northwood, left alone in the huge godown, felt very much as he did when left at the Blue Coat School long ago. Yet he was the master of the place !

He gave orders for a small room to be washed out and furnished with a table and a couple of chairs for his office.

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The rest of the day he gave up to making notes of his new surroundings. It seemed to him that he had got a herculean task before him, and that if he was at all successful in his new work he would be worth some thousands a year to Brownlow and Co.

It was astonishing that every European firm in the place allowed the actual manipulation of vast quantities of valuable produce to remain entirely in the hands of their Chinamen, without any practical check on them. Well, the firm made money and so did the Chinamen! Everybody except John Finlay appeared to be quite contented with the existing state of affairs.

For a few days young Northwood roamed up his godowns, apparently an idle observer of what was taking place. The Chinese soon got used to his presence and took not the slightest notice of him. But one fine morning when a very heavy shipment of produce was being loaded into lighters at the No. 1 godown, he ran up to the rattan floor and found it nearly deserted. A merely skeleton force of coolies was languidly employed in sorting rattans, and the whole place was quiet to an unhealthy degree. On returning to the ground floor he discovered the missing coolies busily engaged in loading sacks of sago-flour at the rate of one cent each, so that besides drawing their daily pay, they were earning a lot of money at piece-work as well.

Northwood said not a single word about his discovery, but went to his desk, and busied himself with sheets of foolscap, out of which he presently designed forms of pay-sheets and muster-rolls which would check that little game considerably on some future day.

Again, when half a dozen beam-scales were swinging and swaying under the impact of piles of produce being weighed into the godown, he found the Chinese clerks jotting their weights down on any bit of paper in such a slovenly way that it was practically impossible to check their figures. He set to work to design a set of weighing-

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books neatly ruled into squares, so that every figure should fit exactly in its place. Spaces were left for the signatures of the weighing-clerks, and there were other spaces in which were to be filled in the marks and numbers of the different packages and the name of the vessel by which they were shipped. With various other details added, Northwood expected to have a complete history of each parcel of produce, and to be able to trace the defaulting weighing-clerk when trouble arose. Hitherto the produce godowns had been mere jungles, in which the dishonesty of Chinese storekeepers and clerks was easily concealed. Having designed various other forms likely to systematize his work, Northwood walked off with the lot to the printers.

When he got his books and forms back he explained the whole system to Hoon Kiat, and insisted that it should come into force at once. Hoon Kiat was vastly surprised, but while admitting that the plan was excellent, suggested that it was certain to meet with much opposition. To this Northwood replied by asking Hoon Kiat to give the necessary orders personally to the different people concerned.

Trouble was evidently brewing, nor was it very long before the situation became critical. Chia Chow Kit, the head coolie, led the rebellion. This man, though nominally a coolie, was really the master of all the up-river godowns. He was a big, brawling ruffian, of repulsive aspect, who generally went about half naked, but he knew how to handle his men. Chow Kit was going round the building waving in his hand the new pay-sheet, concerning which he made the most unpleasant remarks, whilst he urged the weighing-clerks to throw their new books into the river. This had to be stopped if possible, so Northwood quietly walked up to the head coolie and asked him why he was making such a noise.

"What are all these new papers and books?" yelled Chow Kit. "Do you think I am going to spend all day

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writing down how much rattan each coolie picks per day? I won't do it! These new weighing-books are all nonsense, and must be thrown into the river!"

The scene with Chow Kit was interrupted for a time by a note from Finlay ordering Northwood to get away three hundred tons of sago-flour to the wharf instantly, as a steamer wanted the cargo urgently. It so happened that the sago-flour had already been loaded into tongkangs, or big native barges, which carried about one hundred tons each. These boats were worked by crews of the most thievish, disorderly and insolent Klings in existence. The Kling serang, on being sent for, shouted, with the impudent volubility peculiar to his race, that no tongkangs could leave the river that day because they could not get under the bridges. As a matter of fact, Chow Kit was making vigorous signs to the serang behind Northwood's back, which the scoundrel understood perfectly well.

Northwood thereupon crossed the plank to the foremost tongkang and saw that there were at least a couple of feet to spare beneath the bridge, and that the tide was falling. Pointing this out to the serang, he told him to get the boats off at once or they would ground on the mud. The Kling positively refused to obey his orders, and upon Northwood threatening him, he made a rush at the young fellow, and clasping him tight in his hairy muscular arms, tried to fling him into the foul, stinking creek called the Singapore River.

Utterly taken by surprise, Northwood managed to keep his foothold and get a good grip of the infuriated Kling, who tried desperately to drag him to the river's edge. The fellow did not in the least mind a fall into the water himself, as long as he could get Northwood in and drown him if he could. The bridge was choked with a mob of natives watching with immense interest the struggle between the black man and the white.

The Kling was very powerful and active, and, unencum-

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bered by any clothing except a loin-cloth, looked as if he would not be denied, until Northwood suddenly shifted his grip to the fellow's throat and put forth all his strength in a tremendous effort to choke him. The Kling was compelled to loose his hold, and to wrench himself free. Retreating a few steps over the floor of sago-flour sacks, he collected himself for another rush for the white man. But before he could get his long arms to work, the Englishman dealt him a smashing blow between the eyes, which laid him out, spouting blood from the nose.

Northwood made an effort to pick the man up, but the Kling sprang to his feet with a yell of fright and fled across the plank to the quay. He thought his enemy intended to finish him off.

Northwood now went ashore himself and forthwith started the Kling boatmen to their work. The ruffians, utterly cowed by the defeat of their leader, submitted to be called "the children of swine," "black pigs," and other opprobrious epithets, while cuffs and kicks were dealt out to them by the victorious Northwood with lavish generosity. Under such incitements the three tongkangs left their moorings and vanished below the bridge in something like record time.

Northwood returned to his little office with his shirt in tatters and exhaling a powerful odour of oily Kling, with which he would have gladly dispensed. However, he sent home for some clean things, and Hoon Kiat had a tub of fresh water brought into his room. He was about to start on his toilet when he found himself confronted by the serang and a native policeman. The Kling had carefully smeared himself all over with blood and looked a horrid sight; the little Malay constable in his shabby uniform appeared to be a very mild and inoffensive person.

"*Tangkap sama dia!* Arrest him! Take him to the police station! I charge him with murdering me," vociferated the enraged Kling.

Northwood took no notice of him for the moment, but

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said to the little constable : " Go away ! You don't want to fight me, do you ? No ? That's all right ! Just you go back to your duty ! "

" *Baik, Tuan !* " replied the wee man, respectfully saluting Northwood, as he hurried off to some other place where blows and kicks were not quite so plentiful.

" Now go ! " shouted Northwood to the amazed serang, and as the villain hung in the wind a bit, Johnnie spun him round and freshened his way with two or three hearty kicks, which sent him flying through the door. He followed the man up to the gateway and saw him scramble into a gharry which drove off to Brownlow's head-quarters at Collyer Quay.

He was now free to wash and dress himself, but it appeared that there was to be no end to his vexations that day. Barely had he got himself comparatively cool and comfortable, when Chow Kit forced his way into his room with his arms full of the new weighing-books, which he flung on the floor. Then he took the new pay-sheet form from his waistbelt, tore it in half, threw it on the floor and spat upon it.

" Now, Chow Kit, you know perfectly well why you object to those things on the floor. It's because they will put a stop to your abominable cheating. When those pay-sheets are properly filled in, they will prevent you from charging for the same men twice over, as you know you do every day of your life ! "

" *Bohong !* " (" You lie ! ") shrieked Chow Kit.

Now there was only one answer possible to such an insult. Northwood looked his man square in the face and dealt him a tremendous blow on his right ear with the flat of his hand. The hulking Chinaman reeled under the force of the blow. His ugly face turned a deep red, and for a moment it looked as if he would attack Northwood, who was quite ready for him. Suddenly he changed his mind, and saying he would go to Collyer Quay, forthwith disappeared.

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Hoon Kiat, who had witnessed these scenes with much concern, then said that it would be much better if he went to Collyer Quay also, to represent matters correctly to Chia Ann Lock, the compradore at head-quarters, or things might assume a very undesirable aspect. He thereupon slipped a silk jacket over his other things and drove off to Collyer Quay.

As everybody else seemed to be making their way to Collyer Quay, Johnnie thought that it would be just as well if he went there himself to defend his interests in person. He took one of the new weighing-books and the new pay-sheets with him.

As he entered Brownlow's he noticed that the compradore's room was crowded with people, who seemed to be all talking at once to the great Chia Ann Lock. The gore-bespattered Kling was there, and Chow Kit, who had got his head most beautifully swathed in bandages. Hoon Kiat was also present.

As Northwood entered the general office, Mr. William Wapshot proclaimed in a tonitruant voice: "Here comes the Singapore Slugger! Anybody like to put up a few rounds with Mister Northwood?"

There was a general laugh at Wapshot's sally, in which Finlay did not join, however. He glared angrily at Wapshot, but that gentleman happened to be too busy with his papers at the moment to notice Finlay or his looks.

"So you've come at last!" said Finlay very irritably to Northwood. "What the devil have you been doing at No. 1 godown? There has been nothing going on there except the punching of heads and the kicking of behinds from what I hear! You may think it very funny, but is it business? Look at the nuisance the whole thing is to *me*! A horrible Kling, who looks as if he had been poleaxed, comes here to make a scene, and it takes half a dozen tambies to get the howling beast out of the office. Then you must needs knock Chia Chow Kit about, and that

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gets me into instant trouble with Chia Ann Lock. The two men are related in some way. What was the trouble with Chow Kit ? ”

Northwood explained the whole affair. Finlay examined the pay-sheet and weighing-book with much interest. He asked if Northwood was positive about the rattan-coolies being made to work at loading cargo into tongkangs. On this point Northwood was easily able to convince him, and pointed out that it was one of many abuses which had probably been in existence for years and must have cost Brownlow and Co. very large sums of money in the aggregate. Finlay admitted that it was a very serious matter indeed. He had always suspected that something of the kind had been going on, but could never get any proof of these long continued frauds.

Finally he said : “ I think I had better go round with you *now* to look into this thing myself.”

He thereupon ordered a tamby to get a gharry to take them to the No. 1 godown. The messenger flew downstairs and into the compradore's room with the news that the *Tuan Besar* (the Big Tuan), was going to the No. 1 godown with Tuan Northwood, after which he fetched the gharry. The meeting in the compradore's room broke up at once. Hoon Kiat and Chow Kit lost no time in getting back to their godown.

Northwood took Finlay over the building and showed him, amongst other things, the books and pay-sheet on the floor where Chow Kit had flung them. Finlay had all the Chinese clerks mustered, and Chow Kit was made to pick up the books and serve them out again. Chow Kit was then handed a liberal supply of pay-sheets and told that he would not be allowed to draw a single dollar for wages until these sheets were properly filled up and signed by Tuan Northwood. If Chow Kit or anyone else was dissatisfied with Tuan Northwood, he was at liberty to draw the wages due to him and quit. Chow Kit and the others listened in sullen silence, but did not say a word.

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Finlay then had a talk with Northwood in his little office.

"I don't at all mind your dealing with those swine of Kling boatmen in your own way. I know what they are, and I shall be much surprised if the lot of them don't land you in court for criminal assault. But it's different about Chow Kit. You should *not* have struck the man, even when he called you a liar. You must try to make your peace with Chia Ann Lock, with whom I cannot possibly afford to quarrel. See him to-morrow when some of this excitement has blown over. Mind you, if there is a strike or any general interruption of our business, you must and shall go at once! Don't forget that!"

"There will be no strike or trouble, Mr. Finlay, if you will give me your support."

"All right, Northwood, I will do what I can, but I am not going to fight your battles for you, nor am I going to get myself into trouble with London about you. I know perfectly well that if George Carlyle were here he would get rid of you this very evening. You know yourself that Carlyle would sooner risk offending any mortal man in Singapore than give Ann Lock the slightest cause for discontent. You have gone into this thing on your own lines, and you will have to get out of your difficulties as best you can!"

So saying, he returned to Collyer Quay, leaving Johnnie Northwood in a particularly unenviable position. He understood that physical force, that is to say, arguments taking the shape of kicks and cuffs, would have to be abandoned. He would now have to show that he was something of a diplomatist. Presently he thought he saw his way to working a bluff on his Chinamen.

He left his No. 1 godown earlier than usual that evening, and found his way to Market Street, where, as he expected, he was not long in coming across his former head storekeeper, the excellent Koh Say Kiat, who

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promptly invited him to have some tea in the shop of a neighbouring Chinese merchant. Here they could talk things over quietly to their hearts' content. The faithful Say Kiat listened to the story of his former master's difficulties—about which, by the way, he was perfectly well informed. Indeed, he was told what he did not know himself. It had already been arranged that part of the clerks and coolies were to stay away next day from the Brownlow up-river godowns, while the rest were to go on strike punctually at noon.

It looked very much as if Johnnie was doomed to a very disastrous and humiliating failure. To be taken back by Brownlow and Co. was a great point, but to be dismissed by them after a few days' service would make his position in Singapore infinitely worse than it had ever been before.

The outlook was gloomy indeed, but, luckily for him, Johnnie Northwood had "a stout heart for a steep braise," and set to work to explain to Say Kiat the plan by which he hoped to save himself. The two men talked over the thing carefully in all its details, and finally Say Kiat said that he did not care if he worked all night at the scheme, but promised that he would faithfully carry out his share of what had to be done, and that he would arrive on the scene of action at the appointed time. If the thing cost a few dollars it did not matter.

From Market Street Northwood went to the Central Police Station to see his friend Inspector Quinton, who had been a favourite guest at Woodleigh in the palmy days of the Northwoods. When Johnnie attempted to explain his altered position to Quinton, he found to his astonishment that the inspector knew all about him and his troubles. Quinton roared with mirth as he said: "Why, about forty Klings have been here to-day to get summonses against you for criminal assault. They swear that two or three of their number are dying of their injuries and that they will have you arrested on a charge

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of murder in a day or two. You must have laid about you like a veritable Trojan to put some forty odd men *hors de combat* ! ”

“ Well, Quinton, I knocked a few of them about, but only in a quiet sort of way. But I am afraid of a much bigger row to-morrow, in which others will be concerned besides myself, and I shall be very glad of some police protection at the No. 1 godown to-morrow morning.”

“ All right, Mr. Northwood ! I know that the whole thing is a plant, and why it is run. I will send an experienced native sergeant and half a dozen of our best men to guard the main entrance. What is more, I will look in myself once or twice just to see how you are getting on, and to do what I can to keep the peace.”

“ Thanks, Quinton. A visit from you will do more for me than half the police force of Singapore.”

Thereupon the two men shook hands very warmly, and Johnnie went home to his mother. He said nothing about his troubles and slept like a top until daylight.

Next morning he was at the No. 1 godown at seven a.m. sharp. It soon became evident that things were all wrong. Half the clerks were away. Hoon Kiat, who did not at all enjoy telling a lie, explained that they were absent on account of illness. Northwood noted the names of the invalids in his pocket-book and inquired of Chow Kit why so many coolies were absent. The headman replied that it was their *hari sumbayang*, that they had gone to worship their ancestors' spirits, or something of the kind. Northwood required of Chow Kit a list of the worshippers, and notified him that such things must not happen in future without permission. Otherwise there would be trouble about the pay-sheets.

Chow Kit grinned derisively, but his jaw dropped when he saw the whole building being invested by a strong squad of police under the command of a horribly fierce-looking native officer.

Both Hoon Kiat and Chow Kit asked Northwood the

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meaning of this phenomenon, but could get nothing from him but the vaguest generalities. Perhaps there were thieves in the godown, and perhaps the police would arrest them, but whatever happened would be as ordered by Tuan Allah !

The Kling boatmen, who were in an open state of insurrection, and the Chinese coolies, who were loafing about the huge building scratching themselves and spitting ostentatiously, as is their pleasant habit on such occasions, did not at all like the turn things were taking. Still they deliberately defied Northwood's orders to turn to and load the cargo-boats. At nine a.m. Inspector Quinton, looking very smart in his uniform, stepped briskly into the godown, while his policemen saluted him.

Quinton greeted Northwood very cordially, and seating himself at Hoon Kiat's table, asked for a cup of Chinese tea, which was instantly handed to him.

Oddly enough, Koh Say Kiat turned up the next minute, followed by a tribe of out-of-work clerks who had served Northwood and Son in their Battery Road establishment. Quinton, who knew everybody, said: "*Tabek!* Koh Say Kiat. So you have come to ask Tuan Northwood for work. An excellent idea! I knew Tuan Northwood would never forget his old friends. Well, there is lots of work for you here!"

Koh Say Kiat made a suitable reply, consisting chiefly of a pious expression of the hope that the Tuan inspector might live for many long years and become the father of numerous children.

Next Boon Whatt, Johnnie's former head coolie, came surging into the building at the head of a swarm of Battery Road coolies, bluntly demanding work on any terms to save them from starvation.

Finally, old Sheikh Kadir Bux turned up with a crowd of hairy boatmen, formerly in the Northwood service, who literally bawled for permission to bring their idle tongkangs alongside the Brownlow quay to load cargo. Was

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not Tuan Northwood their father? Would he let his children starve?

This brought the situation to a climax. The Brownlow coolies and boatmen, with a volley of curses and a chorus of howls and yells, started in to attack the Northwood intruders. Quinton blew his whistle, whereupon policemen seemed to spring mysteriously from the earth to arrest the most riotous of the Brownlow lot and march them off to the police station. Northwood asked Koh Say Kiat to take his people away, and he and they vanished forthwith. Quinton, remarking that everything seemed to be quite quiet, marched off with his policemen, leaving Northwood the master of the situation.

Calling up Hoon Kiat and Chow Kit before him, Northwood said: "Now I want to make friends of you two men, but I will stand no nonsense. You, Chow Kit, wanted to organize a strike, but you forgot that I can replace the whole staff, coolies and boatmen, by my own people at a moment's notice. Take care! Now there is no time to be wasted. If those sick weighing-clerks and those ancestor-worshipping coolies are not back here in one hour I will sack the whole lot of them. Start the tongkangs at once, Chow Kit! Don't forget, there is to be no dinner hour for anyone to-day. We will work right on to midnight without a stop to make up for lost time."

Then Northwood turned himself loose on the beaten natives. He kept his gangs going at a sharp trot the whole time and never gave them a moment's pause. Pigs, dogs and sons of unmentionable animals were they, in the language they so freely applied to others. In sheer dread of his formidable fist the coolies and boatmen worked like slaves. Occasionally a Chinaman would plaintively cry "*Koupeh!*" but that was all.

Having set everything going at Godown No. 1, and having seen his invalids and ancestor-worshippers file back into the godown looking singularly dejected, Northwood

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made a hasty visit to the other up-river godowns, to find that in sympathy with Godown No. 1, Nos. 2 and 3 had resumed work.

Northwood then bethought himself of Collyer Quay and of what Finlay would have to say concerning his latest move. He decided to pay his court to Chia Ann Lock first and foremost.

This Chia Ann Lock was a most extraordinary person. He was a very good-looking Chinaman, always beautifully groomed, who drove to Brownlow's in a smartly turned-out brougham with a pair of fine horses. He could be either as soft as silk or as coarse as his kinsman Chia Chow Kit, as occasion served. Albeit Brownlow and Co. paid him a salary of some two hundred dollars a month, he was very wealthy and owned some very handsome and productive properties. It seemed to be an acknowledged fact that he took toll on the whole of Brownlow's enormous Singapore trade.

It seemed singular that the firm should allow one of their own servants daily to enrich himself almost avowedly at their expense, but Chia Ann Lock was a sort of Chinese Richelieu, a servant with whom it was very dangerous to meddle. His command of the produce-markets was almost incredible. During the busiest hours of the day his spacious room in Brownlow's ground floor was crowded with the leading Chinese merchants of the place, so that the firm enjoyed the great and unique advantage of having the Produce Exchange of Singapore under their own roof. Whatever profits Chia Ann Lock made on the thousands of tons which he bought for his masters, he always arranged that they should buy a little lower than any of the competing European firms, and Brownlow's could always get the produce they wanted, when at times their neighbours were unable to buy a single pikul. A keen, masterly man, of wonderful capabilities, bursting with pride over the importance of his place and his wealth, exceedingly impatient of opposition in any form, and unhampered by

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scruples of any dimensions—such was Chia Ann Lock, the magnate whom Johnnie Northwood wished to pacify.

The great Chinaman received him with characteristic insolence. "What do you want?" he asked. "More trouble in your godowns? They were quiet enough before you came. Be quick, I am very busy!"

Northwood professed his desire to have Ann Lock's assistance and friendship from that moment, and pointed out how desirable it was that they should work in harmony with each other.

This was not at all in accordance with Ann Lock's ideas. He wanted Northwood to work *under* him, not *with* him, so he cut the interview short.

"You should have come to see me the first day, and I would have told you what to do," he said. "Then there would have been none of this trouble. Go away. I have no time to talk to a *Krani*."

Krani is the term applied to a half-caste scribe or a Chinese weighing-clerk, and, applied to Northwood, was a calculated insult. The young man took it all very quietly, but as he civilly took his departure, he observed Ann Lock very narrowly, and noted that the Chinaman was flushed and nervous. He seemed to be thoroughly uncomfortable and his whole appearance suggested anxiety.

"That man's afraid of me!" said Northwood to himself as he went to see his chief.

Directly Finlay beheld his enterprising junior, he asked in evident anxiety:

"Well! What's going on in the up-river godowns?"

"Everything is in full swing. We shall work rather late to-night to make up for some time we lost this morning, but there's nothing in that!"

"Is that so?" said Finlay in great amazement. "Come into the tiffin-room. I want to talk to you seriously."

Closing the door of the room, Finlay motioned to Northwood to be seated. Then he angrily continued: "What's

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this I hear about your invading our godown with a police force and a mob of your own people? What right have you to have our men arrested and to put your own friends in their places? Upon my word, sir, you carry things with a pretty high hand! What the devil *have* you been doing?"

"I have carried out your orders to the letter. I have not put a single new man into any of your godowns! The first trouble arose when I got your urgent orders to despatch certain lighters to the wharves immediately. I *got* them away, though with some difficulty. I had your strictest orders to avoid anything in the shape of a strike, and I have done so. The men are working in all the up-river godowns much better than they have ever done before. You have evidently been misinformed."

Northwood thereupon gave him the whole history of the affair, and urged that he had to do so much in such a short time, that he literally had not the opportunity of consulting anybody about his actions.

"You're a cool hand!" growled Finlay. "You really mean to say that you've been bluffing for all you are worth? I don't like that sort of thing. It's not business!"

The chief then heard the story of Northwood's interview with Ann Lock, which he did not consider very promising. He sent for Ann Lock, who though somewhat calmer, was still very nervous and irritable. Finlay quietly stated the actual facts of the case to Ann Lock and promised that the people arrested in the No. 1 godown should be released that same evening and that no appointments should be made in any of the up-river establishments without consulting him or Chow Kit.

Ann Lock, who had evidently been filled up with a lot of lies for the express purpose of making him furious, said rather sulkily that he had misunderstood what had taken place, and that if Tuan Northwood would consult him and not put in men of his own at a moment's notice, he was willing to make friends with him; whereupon he

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shook hands with "Tuan Nortood" (no longer a *Krami*) and left the room.

"I don't consider the position very brilliant even now," said Finlay wearily. "What an infernal nuisance you are with your confounded methods! I can't get a decent night's rest thinking what ungodly surprise you are going to spring on me next. Well, I can't spend *all* my time looking after you. I must go. Tell you what! To-day's Friday. Be at my place on Sunday morn at six o'clock. We'll have a good long walk into the country, and we can have time to talk things over. You'll breakfast with me afterwards. But, for God's sake, keep quiet till Sunday!"

So saying, Finlay bolted from the tiffin-room, leaving Northwood in a state of some perplexity. He rather liked that invitation for Sunday morning, but the position was critical enough.

It took him the rest of the day to get his rascals out of the police-cells. The Klings voluntarily offered to withdraw their forty summonses for assault, such being their esteem for a personal friend of Inspector Quinton, whom they hated and feared because he knew all about them. Without his friend Quinton Johnnie Northwood and Koh Say Kiat might have come to dire grief during the recent struggle.

Next morning, work went on briskly in the godowns, but there was an air of suppressed excitement about the men which boded no good. Northwood had been thinking things over during the night, and at noon he called Hoon Kiat and Chow Kit into his room. Clearly there was more mischief brewing, which would have to be dealt with on entirely new lines. Addressing his Chinese colleagues with great cordiality, he said he had been carefully studying the wages paid to clerks and coolies alike, and found that in some cases they were too low, and that the hours were sometimes too long. Weighing-clerks, he remarked, held responsible positions, in which their honesty

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was exposed to many temptations. They should be well paid and not overworked, as was at present the case. There should be more *Kranis*, and they should be better paid. He thought also that higher wages should be given to some of the more expert rattan-coolies and to some of the men who had served Brownlow's for a number of years.

The Chinamen gazed at him with round-eyed astonishment. Of course, the *Tuan Besar's* consent had to be got, but if Hoon Kiat and Chow Kit would get the support of Ann Lock to an improved scale of pay, Northwood undertook to settle matters with Tuan Finlay. Would they assist him in making up a new scale of pay on the lines suggested? The list was soon made up, with Hoon Kiat and Chow Kit's names figuring at the top, and though it was much longer and represented a lot more money than Northwood expected, he promised to see that it was passed at Collyer Quay.

That afternoon, on returning from the No. 2 godown, Northwood found a case of champagne in his room. On being questioned, Hoon Kiat said it had been put there by Chow Kit. Northwood said that he had no wish to offend Chow Kit, but he could not accept presents from him, and that the champagne must be returned forthwith, whereupon the case was taken away. Later, Chow Kit turned up to express his surprise that Northwood should refuse a case of John Small's best champagne, and offered to send it privately to his house. This proposal was firmly declined. Chow Kit turned things over in his mind for a minute or two, and then the villain in a hoarse whisper offered to make Northwood a present of a pretty young girl. Where could he send the damsel—and the champagne?

Northwood had some difficulty in keeping his countenance as he explained to Chow Kit that he must really refuse to take girls and champagne from him or anybody else, and that he meant what he said.

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The Chinaman went off both surprised and discontented. He felt that it would be risky to offer Northwood the raw dollars, but he could *not* understand his very delicate offerings being rejected. He made up his mind that Northwood was a man of no refinement and rather a coarse habit of thought.

Barely had Johnnie got home when he was waited upon by a noisy deputation of Brownlow's Klings, who put a wreath of flowers round his neck, proclaimed him their father and protector, and presented him with various baskets of geese, ducks and fowls, which made a most confounded clamour. They stocked him with enough oranges to last him for months if they would keep long enough. He accepted these gifts, as there was no possibility of refusing them, and their value was small. But when they offered him a very doubtful-looking diamond ring, he positively would not accept it, to the evident relief of the assembled Klings, who were finally got rid of with the greatest difficulty to a loud and reiterated chorus of "*Jangan potong Kira Tuan !*" ("Don't cut our accounts, Tuan !")

Johnnie Northwood saw clearly enough that if he would only "stand in" with Chow Kit and one or two others, he could have an exceedingly good time of it, while he made a lot of money. That, of course, was not his conception of his new post, but he hoped that Finlay would recognize the tremendous amount of work and management and the absolute integrity demanded of a man in his excessively trying billet by paying him a really good salary, of which he stood in considerable need.

Northwood kept his appointment with Finlay punctually on Sunday morning, and they were soon tramping through the pretty country roads and lanes of Singapore, while they discussed the business in which they both were so keenly interested. Johnnie finally got his senior to have some confidence in his ideas of management, and to believe that increased efficiency would go hand in hand with a

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constantly increasing economy, as slackness and corruption were gradually reformed out of existence. Finlay was so heartily amused at Chow Kit's idea of an irresistible temptation that his companion thought it a favourable opportunity to introduce his plan for promoting honesty and efficiency by the inducements of higher pay and less work. But Finlay would hear of no such thing. He was not a Scotsman for nothing!

"I knew jolly well you would have some infernal surprise in store for me, but I didn't expect this one!" he shouted. "First of all, you knock your people about and throw them into the police-cells, and now you want to load them up with dollars for doing less work. I never heard such nonsense. I sent you up river to reduce expenses, not to pile them up in this reckless way!"

In vain did Northwood plead his cause with all the skill at his command. Finlay began to lose his temper, and his junior found it discreet to divert the conversation to other topics. By the time the pair of them had done a ten-mile spin, and had enjoyed a refreshing bath, they both sat down to a capital breakfast, hungry and happy men. Mrs. Finlay made such a charming hostess, that it was nearly eleven o'clock before Johnnie Northwood realized that he was much overdue at his produce-godowns. It was one of the trials of his new post that he would rarely have his Sundays free from his labours.

With his usual perseverance Northwood determined to get the improved terms for his people sanctioned without delay. It had to be done in order to maintain his prestige and authority. Ann Lock heartily approved the scheme, and when the pair of them attacked Finlay on the subject, he was compelled to submit with a very ill grace to a thing of which he entirely disapproved. He was much disgusted to find Northwood and Ann Lock, who had so recently been bitter enemies, in alliance against him and compelling him to accept their terms.

Otherwise Finlay had ample reason to be satisfied with

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Northwood's management. Each morning on arriving at his office, he would find a neatly-written report on his desk, detailing everything that had been done at the up-river godowns the previous day. Whenever it was possible to send him samples of the produce received, such as tapioca, sago, pepper, etc., the samples accompanied the report, while accurately descriptive notes gave him an excellent idea of what kind of gambier and quality of hides had been weighed into the godowns. A memorandum of produce shipped each day, with notes on the appearance of the goods when delivered, completed the report. So that Finlay, without stirring from his chair, had an excellent idea in the course of a few minutes' study of what was actually taking place daily in the distant up-river godowns.

Northwood made important discoveries by the simple process of sitting at a beam-scale himself and re-weighing certain lots of produce, which, after having been but a few days in the godown, showed a phenomenal shrinkage not to be explained by any natural process. The new weighing-books immediately betrayed the clerks responsible for these shortages, who were there and then sent about their business.

By a friendly arrangement with Chow Kit, a certain proportion of the new men engaged were selected from Northwood's Battery Road people, to their great delight.

All worked smoothly and efficiently at the end of the first month of Northwood's service in his new place. He was contemplating the results achieved with some satisfaction, as he went over certain figures, when old Kauh, the cashier, walked into his office, and putting a couple of banknotes on his table, asked him to sign a receipt for the seventy-five dollars.

"What's this for?" asked Northwood.

"Your wages!" answered Kauh.

No, there was no mistake about the amount so far as Kauh was concerned; if Tuan Northwood did not believe

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him, he could appeal to the *Tuan Besar*. The young man lost no time in going round to Collyer Quay to inquire into this thing, to find himself very badly received by his chief.

"You're *always* wanting money, and this time it's for yourself!" growled Finlay. "I've fixed your salary at seventy-five dollars a month, and if you don't like it you can leave it!"

Northwood spun round on his heel and marched out of the office with his heart playing tattoo on his ribs. So this was what he had come to after all his battles. Seventy-five dollars—the pay of half-caste fellows like Albuquerque or de Castro! His first impression was to send in his resignation, but on second thoughts he determined to wait a little before doing so. For one thing, he was very much interested in his work. Better to get everything in first-class working order before resigning.

CHAPTER XXV

CAPTAIN NORTHWOOD GOES BACK TO BORNEO

AS Johnnie Northwood's labours commenced at seven o'clock in the morning, and were often prolonged until late at night, he had but little time in which to study what was going on in the world outside his godowns. He was surprised, therefore, when his father strode into the No. 1 godown and grasped him by the hand. The *Alastor* had arrived at daylight, and hearing at McAlister's of his son's whereabouts, he had determined to see him before anyone else. Postal communications with the Moluccas were few and far between, and Johnnie's last letters had not reached him. He was much surprised to learn on what terms his son was employed, but urged him to stick to his post and make the most of it; his reward would come sooner or later. The generous old sailor took out his pocket-book and handed Johnnie notes to the value of two hundred dollars.

"That will help you a bit! I've been spending next to nothing all this time. I lived at Amboina in the loft of one of our godowns with one native boy as cook, bottle-washer and laundry-maid. Been living like a native, in fact—cheap and wholesome—a few cents a day does the whole trick!"

Captain Northwood gave a dismal account of the position in the Moluccas. Of course, he had quarrelled with Shelby, who was not running a straight horse by any means. Arratoon was no use at all and had got completely under Shelby's thumb. Moreover, he was so sick of his job, that he had written by the *Alastor* to

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the committee to say he would serve them no longer. Shelby had suddenly discovered that the climate of Amboina no longer suited his wife and family, who were passengers by the *Alastor* on their way to America.

Nor did Captain Northwood intend to serve the committee any longer. By sheer dint of bullying and threatening Shelby he had got him to load everything in the Amboina godowns. He had got every available dollar out of Banda and Ternate, and having put in at Batjan, had insisted on the manager of the Batjan Company paying him a large sum in cash in settlement of accounts. So he had arrived at Singapore with a valuable cargo and a round sum in money. But it was his last effort. He would never go back to those accursed islands again, come what might. If there was nothing else to be done, he would hire himself out as the skipper of a local boat. Perhaps Brownlow's would give him the command of the *Brunei*, and then both he and his son would be in the pay of the big firm. Who would have thought of *that* a few months ago!

Captain Northwood looked in excellent physical health, but it was clear that he was worried and harassed beyond all endurance, as the frequent white tufts in his fine head of hair and his sad eyes sufficiently proclaimed.

The unlucky man, having comforted himself with a chat with his son, went off to report the situation to the members of his committee.

These gentlemen lost no time in holding a meeting to consider the situation.

Captain Northwood's report filled them with consternation. It appeared that the conveyance of the Sungei Mas estate, which had cost so much and upon which so much had been spent, was illegal. The Resident, having been advised to this effect, had taken possession of the estate pending the award of the Court at Batavia on the case. What that award would be there could be no reasonable doubt. The estate would be confiscated

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and sold by public auction for the benefit of the Treasury. Large advances in cash to natives for produce had disappeared with the natives themselves, who had, nevertheless, fulfilled their contracts punctually enough until now.

It was rumoured all over the islands that the firm of Northwood and Shelby was on the verge of dissolution. Various Dutchmen, Chinamen and Arabs were looking forward with much satisfaction to picking up buildings, wharves, lighters, and all sorts of valuable property for next to nothing.

In vivid contrast to Captain Northwood's news was the usual florid letter from Shelby, congratulating the committee on their prosperous outlooks and on the fact that he had been able to send them such a valuable cargo by the *Alastor*. He begged the committee to send the steamer back to the Moluccas with the least possible delay with a full cargo, of which he handed particulars, and he urgently demanded a certain sum in cash for the requirements of the trade. Not a word about Sungei Mas complications or advances to natives against produce. Not a word about Captain Northwood or his movements.

"I call this man a humbug!" said Finlay, as soon as Shelby's letter had been read. Now that it was all too late, the other members of the committee thought the same thing. Ogilvie was evidently disconcerted, while Arbuthnot was positively blue with disappointment. The whole thing must be ended at once. Arbuthnot declared he would not advance another penny to purchase more goods for Shelby. The best thing to be done was to sell the *Alastor* and her cargo at once and pay the proceeds into the bank. It was decided at the same time to sell Captain Northwood's Borneo property for the benefit of his creditors without delay. As for the very large amount of money and property unaccounted for in the Moluccas further consideration was required, but the

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feeling was now in favour of abandoning it rather than spending any more money in trying to recover it.

Captain Northwood, on being consulted about proceedings which would deprive him of his last shred of property, agreed at once, merely remarking that if this had been done some months ago all his creditors would now have been paid in full and a balance left over. However, Shelby had persuaded them otherwise and here was the result.

Finlay remarked that Captain Northwood had evidently done his utmost to bring every penny he could with him from the Moluccas and was giving the committee all the assistance in his power. This was readily recognized, and the meeting broke up, after deputing Finlay and Ogilvie to take such measures as they deemed advisable about realizing the *Alastor* and her cargo.

Meanwhile there seemed to be every prospect of Captain Northwood taking command of the *Brunei*. More than one friend had offered to lend him enough money to buy a small share in the steamer, and Finlay distinctly approved of the idea. The *Brunei*, run as Brownlow's boat, was making money simply because there was no competition on the line, but Finlay was running her on strictly business-like and horribly unpopular lines. The inhabitants of Labuan, Kudat and Sandakan found, to their dismay, that the *Brunei* had suddenly become a "dry ship," on board of which no one was asked to stay to tiffin or dinner. Finlay had suppressed all entertainment allowances as being unnecessary and unadvisable. The captain was, of course, unable to stand drinks and tiffins to a decidedly thirsty and hungry colony at his own expense. Loud were the lamentations over the iced drinks and the jolly tiffins and dinners of the Northwood régime. It used to be a general holiday when a ship came into a Borneo port flying their familiar house-flag. Now things were as dry and dusty as a Dead Sea apple. Where was Captain Northwood all this time? Why didn't he

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come back to Borneo, where his friends would rally round him and put him on his feet again ?

In more important matters Finlay's iron system worked against Brownlow and Co.'s interests. In the days of the Northwoods the Chinese merchants paid their freights when it suited them. Indeed, if they were pressed for money, they could always borrow from the Northwoods at twelve per cent. without any trouble. Now the traders were harried mercilessly for the slightest arrears, and finally Finlay decreed that no cargo should be delivered until the freights were first settled.

These new conditions, together with the loss of their banking facilities, upset the native traders completely. On board the *Brunei* the captain and officers spent much of their time filling up complicated forms to which they were quite unused and which made their lives miserable. They swore that whether it was a tintack or an ounce of butter which was missing, the deficiency was combed out of the forms in Brownlow's office and charged to them.

Captain Northwood had built up his trade on popular lines. Some laxity and waste there was, no doubt, but the business could easily afford it. Whereas Finlay with his scientifically severe system, was undoubtedly establishing order and economy, but he was alienating the goodwill of everybody to such an extent as to leave the Borneo trade at the mercy of the first competitor who chose to put on a steamer against him.

Johnnie Northwood had endeavoured to point out the inevitable result of being too hard on the Borneo traders, but Finlay merely told him to mind his own business. It was no longer for him to concern himself about the Borneo trade !

About this time John Grinston began to interest himself in the affairs of Captain Northwood. He asked his friend a number of questions about the *Alastor* ; then he made an offer to the committee for the steamer at an

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absurdly low price, which they nevertheless accepted at once, and she became the property of Messrs. Grinston and Co. A few weeks afterwards this enterprising firm resold the *Alastor* to a Frenchman, who wanted a steamer for the Saigon trade, at almost double the price they paid for her. Even then the Frenchman got her dirt cheap, as Captain Northwood remarked. The Frenchman put his steamer under French colours and re-christened the *Alastor* the *Marie Louise*. The sorely-trying Captain Northwood merely remarked to his son: "I never thought I should see the dear old boat flying the French flag or re-christened after a French Dolly Mop!"

The committee, now having got their hand in, sent an auctioneer to Labuan to sell Captain Northwood's estate in that island, where he owned practically everything worth having except the coal-mines. The wily Chinese and natives soon settled matters for the auctioneer. It was arranged between them that each man should bid for the property which he occupied and for no other. This understanding was mightily well observed, and ended in the whole of Labuan being sold up for prices which represented a *four years' rental*!

As for paying up the mortgages on the sago factories, the Chinese simply laughed at the idea, and told the auctioneer to seize the factories and sell them—if he could! A sago-factory is a valuable thing in full working order, and turns out an amazing quantity of first-class flour with the simplest kind of appliances possible. But once it stops working, there is nothing to realize on, as the Singapore auctioneer discovered, but a lot of vats, troughs, attap sheds and large piles of decomposing fibre, giving off a tremendous smell, which will kill anyone except a Chinaman. Nobody wants to buy these things. The capital of a Borneo sago-factory is expended on the large number of imported Chinese coolies, who take the place of machinery, and in advances to natives up country for cutting down the sago-palms in the

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endless swamps of Borneo and delivering them at certain points.

The discomfited auctioneer found that he could neither sell the imported coolies nor recover advances from a lot of monkey-like natives living in the midst of swampy sago-forests. The Singapore man's mission was a flat failure throughout. It was another severe blow to the hopes of the committee, who had expected large sums of money from the Labuan estate. The result nearly killed poor Captain Northwood, who once more relapsed into a state of hopeless apathy. The mismanagement of the committee was something incomprehensible. Here was Captain Northwood, who had just come in from the Moluccas with every ounce of cargo and every guilder on which he could lay hands and had successfully saved more from Shelby and others than could possibly have been expected, practically ignored when it came to his own Labuan property! Had *he* been sent to Labuan, he could easily have broken up the combination which resulted in the property being practically given away. But the committee preferred to work by rule in a British colony comparatively near to Singapore, and so an auctioneer was sent to hammer the estate away in the usual regulation style. The property was simply slaughtered.

Shelby went into a white rage when he found that after Captain Northwood had swept Amboina, Batjan, Banda and Ternate bare of produce and cash, the *Alastor* was laid up in Singapore harbour, and that his supplies were completely stopped. He sailed for Singapore by the next Dutch steamer, accompanied by Arratoon, so that everything in the Moluccas was simply left to take care of itself.

Shelby tried first to bully the committee, and then to pose as a ruined and injured person. But Finlay and Ogilvie gave him a very bad time of it, and put him through a horribly severe cross-examination about the Sungei Mas estate and other properties, and also about

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goods and cash for which no accounts had been rendered. Out of this he came very badly indeed. Shelby got sulky and was with difficulty induced to have anything further to say to the committee. He went about Singapore trying to wheedle people into financing a new "Moluccas Trading Company," which was to acquire the very valuable derelict properties of Northwood and Shelby for a mere song, and generally to make a huge fortune at once. Nobody would listen to the man, and as he was a person not much given to wasting his time, he packed up his traps and took the next boat to Batavia without troubling to say farewell to the committee or anyone else.

From this point Shelby disappeared from amidst the men of the Far East. He apparently made a final visit to Amboina. Then returning to Batavia, he went by a Dutch steamer to Amsterdam and thence to New York. Long afterwards Johnnie Northwood heard that Shelby, once more an American citizen, had purchased considerable properties in and about his native town, which had risen, *more Americano*, suddenly and prodigiously in value. Exactly where Shelby found the necessary capital for his fortunate investments in property Johnnie had a fairly good idea. If the Moluccas Islands had ruined the Northwoods and Captain Hardy, they had provided Shelby with a ladder to the acquisition of a large fortune.

Shelby is now a wealthy man, and, naturally, is greatly respected. He is as happy as a clam at high water, to use an Americanism. Shelby might easily have made even a greater pile quite honestly in the Moluccas if it had not been for his incurable greediness and his absolute incapacity to share his profits with any living soul. With him it was a case of the lot or nothing. Shelby for himself and the devil take the hindmost was his motto, and, like many other selfish and unprincipled men, he got what he wanted in the end. He enjoyed, no doubt, many a hearty laugh in his American home when he

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thought, as he did very frequently, of the softness and imbecility of those "rotters," the Northwoods.

Everybody concerned was now utterly wearied of the protracted and disastrous liquidation of the Northwood firms. The committee, satisfied that they had got hold of everything possessed by the two Northwoods, and that it was sheer waste of time and money to attempt to grapple with such a slippery and elusive customer as Shelby, dissolved. Northwood and Son's books and papers were packed in cases and stored in a corner of Ogilvie's godown, there to be silently devoured by white ants.

The creditors simply kept what each of them had managed to secure of the Northwood assets. Some of the creditors were paid in full, some were partly paid, and others at a distance got absolutely nothing at all. In this indescribable welter and muddle ended the affairs of Northwood and Son.

Well might Shelby, safely across the Atlantic, chuckle and crow at the ease with which he had bluffed half Singapore with his fairy-tales.

Meanwhile, Captain Northwood, much to the uneasiness of his son, had renewed his frequent consultations with John Grinston. Presently it came out that Grinston was advising the Captain not to take command of the *Brunel*, but to run a steamer of his own on the Borneo trade.

It turned out that Grinston and Co. had a mortgage on Captain Potter's steamer, the *Paklat*, which had run on a reef and required some rather heavy repairs. Potter had not the funds available for the dock bill, and Grinston now bethought himself of foreclosing on Potter and transferring the ship to Captain Northwood.

The unhappy Potter lost every penny he put into the ship and was a ruined man, but that, of course, Grinston could not worry over. Captain Northwood,

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having no funds wherewith to purchase the *Paklat*, Grinston assured him that a mortgage on the vessel would settle that matter, and talked much of old times together and of the bright prospect for the future.

Captain Northwood was greatly taken with the idea, and was loud in his praises of Grinston, whom he declared was the finest and straightest man he had ever met in business. The *Paklat* was undoubtedly a fine steamer, larger and faster than the ex-*Alastor*, and quite able to compete with the *Brunei*. Nor was the price Grinston asked for her unreasonable. So it was settled that Grinston and Co. were to become Captain Northwood's agents. The firm's solicitors were instructed to draw up the necessary papers, while the *Paklat* was put into dock to be repaired and overhauled under the skilled supervision of her future owner.

When, however, the steamer was ready for sea and the papers ought to have been signed, a little hitch occurred. Grinston informed Captain Northwood that his London partner, Mr. Grabbie, had cabled that he required collateral security to protect his firm in the event of the *Paklat* being run to a loss. Grinston bewailed the decision of his senior partner, but, after all, business was business, and he suggested that the whole difficulty could be easily surmounted if Mrs. Northwood would mortgage her Woodleigh property to Grinston and Co. as collateral security for the steamer *Paklat*, on which the firm would, of course, have a lien also. It was a matter of form, of course, merely to satisfy Mr. Grabbie's love of order, as there could be no doubt that the *Paklat* would pay handsomely.

It was a painful surprise to Captain Northwood, but he never doubted Grinston for a second. Poor Mrs. Northwood, only too delighted to be of service to her husband, eagerly assented to the mortgaging of her property. Johnnie's protests that Grinston was making

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himself particularly safe, and would not rest until he had got that very desirable property, the Woodleigh estate, into his hands, were treated with small respect. "You can't forgive him because he used to thrash you at singlesticks!" said his father with a jolly laugh.

Everything being signed, sealed and delivered as Grinston required, Captain Northwood, with infinite satisfaction, hoisted the house-flag on board of the *Paklat* and took command of her. The mere idea of getting to sea again, and of going back to his beloved Borneo coast lifted him out of his indifference and apathy and made a new man of him. He was once more the fighting Northwood of the brave days of old.

The *Brunei* happened to be in Singapore harbour on the day when Captain Northwood hoisted his flag, whereupon Cassim and all the best men serving on board the Brownlow steamer deserted in a body to their old commander, whether he wanted them or not. They all swore they would not serve another day on board the *Brunei*. The Chinese and native traders, enraged with Finlay's strict but perfectly reasonable way of doing business, sent every package of cargo and all their deck passengers to their old friend's steamer. The *Paklat* sailed for the Borneo ports deep loaded and with crowded decks, while the *Brunei* steamed out of Singapore an empty ship!

Johnnie, who did not admire the situation in any case, wondered how Finlay would take matters. On his introducing the subject, however, his chief told him yet once again not to trouble about Borneo affairs, but to look after his up-river godowns, which demanded every minute of his time. As if to emphasize his view of things, he invited Johnnie to a dinner he was giving to some nice people. Nor did he in any way alter his friendly attitude to Captain Northwood, and exhibited a really generous spirit in circumstances which were more than sufficiently trying to his temper.

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Johnnie was much relieved to find that things were taking such a favourable turn, because he had always feared that if the idea of his father taking the command of the *Brunei* had assumed any definite shape serious trouble would have been the result. His father and Finlay had such diametrically opposed ideas of working the Borneo trade that a quarrel between the two men appeared to be almost inevitable.

Meanwhile, Captain Northwood was making a triumphal progress along the Borneo coast. On his arrival at Labuan, the whole of the little colony hastened on board the *Paklat* to greet their old friend, by whom they were received in the good old-fashioned style. Success to the *Paklat* was drunk many times in succession; big bottles of iced champagne and a capital tiffin were followed by a still better dinner, to the great delight of Northwood's guests.

Naturally the *Paklat* got all the coastwise trade to be had. A lot of passengers and cargo were waiting for the *Sultan*, but by general consent the whole business was transferred to Captain Northwood. Washington Clarke would have to do without any freight this trip. As for the *Brunei*, lying idly at her anchors, the good people of Labuan avoided her as if the plague was raging on board of her.

At Brunei, Kudat and Sandakan Captain Northwood met with the same flattering reception and the same hearty support. The *Paklat* returned to Singapore loaded and crammed to her utmost capacity, while the *Brunei* came back an empty ship, not having earned enough freight to pay for the coals burnt on her voyage. Finlay's system worked wonderfully well as long as he had the monopoly of the trade, but it broke down completely when confronted with the competition of a popular man working on popular lines.

The *Paklat* had made a very much larger profit on her first voyage than anybody had ventured to anticipate.

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The Captain was jubilant, Mrs. Northwood felt happy and light-hearted once more, and even Johnnie breathed more freely. Perhaps his father would save the Woodleigh estate after all.

Now Finlay hated losing money above all things, and with his usual promptitude he decided to drop the Borneo trade and to get rid of the *Brunei* at once. The Brownlow steamer was laid up immediately on her return from the ruinously expensive voyage, thus unexpectedly relieving Northwood senior from the pressure of a competition with a wealthy firm, which he had greatly feared. To his stupefaction, Johnnie heard a few days later that Finlay had sold the *Brunei* to Chia Ann Lock—for all persons—for a mere song. He ventured to remonstrate with his chief on the subject, but was curtly told once more to mind his own business. However, when but a fortnight later Ann Lock sold his steamer to a Chinese shipowner at a profit of fifty per cent., young Northwood was fully justified in his contention that he ought to have been consulted in the matter. But the mischief was done, and a mere look at Finlay was enough to convince Johnnie that the sale of the *Brunei* was not a safe topic of conversation.

Captain Northwood continued his wonderful successes, and was making money at a rate which astonished everybody.

"Your father is a most remarkable man!" said Finlay to Johnnie one day.

"Yes; he makes money! I would like to earn a little more money myself!"

"You've shown often enough that you don't know what to do with money when you've got it. Money is a dangerous thing in your hands, and, mark you! the less you have of it the better it is for you. I am always reproaching myself for paying you too much as it is!"

Whereupon Johnnie feebly remarked that it was a very hot day, and went off to his up-river godowns, thinking

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hard things of Finlay and his confounded seventy-five dollars a month. His father, it was true, made up all deficiencies with an ever-ready hand, but this was not the right thing, and Johnnie wanted to earn his own living, for which he worked hard enough in all conscience.

The Captain now removed from the brick box of a house which he had taken immediately after his downfall to a nice little bungalow called Greenwood. His new residence was not by any means like Woodleigh, but it was snug and comfortable, and embosomed amidst some beautiful trees in a pretty enclosure of some acre or so in extent, wherein Mrs. Northwood could indulge in her favourite amusement of gardening to her heart's content. The Captain rented Greenwood from that very worthy French priest, Père Leblanc. The latter managed some very extensive properties belonging to various religious bodies in France, who thought it wise to invest their funds under the British flag.

There are a number of Roman Catholic missionaries, chiefly Jesuits, it is believed, in Borneo, who lead a terribly hard and self-denying life in the somewhat hopeless task of trying to convert the wild tribes of the country to Christianity. Presbyterian though he was, Captain Northwood had always felt a deep sympathy with these poor priests, devoted to a life of extreme penury and privation, despised by Europeans and natives alike, and to whom none had a kind word to say. There was always a friendly welcome and a free passage for these priests on board any vessel owned by Northwood. He was always glad to help them whenever he got a chance, and though he little thought it, these Roman Catholic priests were deeply grateful to the Presbyterian captain and took care that Père Leblanc and others should know of his unflinching kindness to them. Northwood was sometimes chaffed by unthinking people about his partiality for the black-robed missionaries, but on such occasions he was wont to laugh cheerily and say : " Never quarrel with priests or women ! "

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The Captain was rather puzzled to understand why Father Leblanc was so anxious to have him as a tenant at such a low rental. Had he but understood it, he got Greenwood remarkably cheap, because Father Leblanc wished to do him a kindness, but the excellent priest managed the transaction with so much tact that he was not allowed to suspect the real facts of the case.

CHAPTER XXVI

SOME ASPECTS OF THE BORNEO TRADE

FOR rather more than a year everything prospered exceedingly with the Northwoods. The *Paklat* was indeed rather too much of a success, for she could scarce keep pace with the expanding trade of Borneo, and had to shut out cargo much too often. This is a danger of which shipowners have to beware, because there is nothing which tempts competition quicker than overflowing freights. Grinston suggested a second steamer, but Captain Northwood would not hear of it. He had had quite enough of having to trust to others, and he positively shuddered sometimes when he thought of Shelby.

Poor Johnnie, it is true, was still drawing his seventy-five dollars a month, but he had the satisfaction of knowing that his management of the up-river godowns was a practical and complete success, which admittedly did him great credit. He was now looked upon as an important part of the Brownlow machinery, and had got his system in full working order and under complete control. It seemed a species of mania with Finlay to keep him at the very hardest of responsible work at a nominal salary. One day, when Johnnie was driving home the absurdity and injustice of the situation, Finlay said to him quite cordially :

"Look here, Northwood ! I may as well tell you that George Carlyle is coming out to replace me in a few months. I promise faithfully to place the value of your services strongly before him. You know Carlyle is a great

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friend of your family and as a senior partner he can do much more for you than I can. Besides, you don't really want any money. Your father will be a rich man again. Be patient and let well alone. And don't forget that your godowns require every minute of your time!"

With this, Johnnie had to be content.

Finlay in private life was a man of delightful conversation, who expressed bold and original views in singularly clear and dignified speech. Johnnie spent many happy hours with him on certain evenings, when they used to debate all sorts of questions at such length that Mrs. Finlay lost all patience with them and turned Johnnie out of the house in order that her husband might have at least a little sleep before he went to the office again. As a business man, Finlay was thorough and sagacious, though, like all other business men, he sometimes made the most unaccountable mistakes about important issues, which would appear to others—after the event, perhaps—to be quite simple.

In the very midst of these bright days of returning prosperity there were signs of impending trouble and disaster. There were ominous reports about a failure of the rice-crops in Siam and Cambodia. As the season wore on the very worst anticipations were realized. Practically there was hardly any rice to be exported from the great granaries of the Far East. The Bangkok and Saigon steamers were running half empty, while a savage cutting of rates set in, which aggravated the situation, until the day came when a fleet of steamers swung idly to their anchors at Singapore, Bangkok and Saigon for want of employment. Steamship-owners began to look with envious eyes at the *Paklat* still steaming steadily to Borneo and back filled to the hatches and swarming with passengers. Why should Captain Northwood make a fortune while everybody else was starving? The inevitable occurred, and no human ingenuity could stave off the impending struggle.

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The Chinese-owned steamer *Hong Ann* was put on the Borneo line, to be followed the next day by yet another competing vessel, the *Ho Kwei*. There was tonnage enough and to spare on Northwood's particular market, and he no longer had to shut out cargo. Still the old sailor put up a magnificent fight and kept such a hold on the trade, that it looked as if he would win through all right. He now extended his run to the Spanish port of Sulu, where he got a good deal of cargo, until the Chinese steamers followed him thither also.

Captain Northwood had some minor troubles, which would not have bothered him much at another season, but which worried him a little just now. He arrived at Kudat at a time when all the tobacco-planters had arrived from up-country to have a meeting at the little seaport to arrange about their supplies of coolies, the shipment of their crops, and other matters which interested them in common. The planters always had a festive time when they met at Kudat, and the *Paklat* was the centre of much prolonged and indiscriminate jollification, during which great quantities of iced champagne and other refreshments were disposed of with amazing rapidity. As the *Ho Kwei* was just a little ahead of him, and the *Hong Ann* was due from Singapore at any hour, Captain Northwood was most anxious to push on; still, he had to wait an extra day at Kudat, which he could ill spare, in order to arrange matters with the jolly Dutch planters, who were not in the slightest hurry themselves. At last the different contracts were signed, and Northwood gave a farewell champagne-tiffin to celebrate his successful negotiations, to his excellent friends the planters and the small number of Dutch ladies who had accompanied their husbands to Kudat.

The tiffin-party was an undeniable success; it was as merry and jolly a gathering as could be wished. Champagne flowed with delightful freedom, while the burly planters swore that they would give every bale of tobacco

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and every coolie to their friend Northwood, even if the rascally Chinese steamers offered to carry them for nothing. The great trouble was to get these merry guests ashore without offending them. Finally, by putting it very nicely but firmly to Count van der Piffel, the great man amongst the tobacco-planters of the district, that the *Paklat* must get through the Kudat Reef before dark, Captain Northwood had the satisfaction of seeing that genial gentleman persuading his friends that it would be very appropriate for them to line up on the wharf and give their hospitable host three cheers as he steamed away on his voyage.

The idea caught on, and as his guests streamed over the gangway, the lines were cast off, and as the ringing cheers were sounding, Northwood waved his hat vigorously with one hand, while he rang up his engines with the other. His chief officer made the bay re-echo with the hoarse sounds of the steam whistle, while the *Paklat* gracefully slid away from the wharf and headed out to sea. Northwood really had not a minute to spare, and kept anxiously looking towards the sunken reefs through which he had to thread his way with none too much daylight, when his chief officer said to him: "I can't make out what's going on ashore, sir! Why don't the people go away?"

Northwood looked round and found his Dutch friends still on the wharf, dancing about and waving their handkerchiefs like so many lunatics, while confused shouts which did not in the least sound like cheers were borne on the breeze. Looking through his binoculars, Northwood especially noticed that Count van der Piffel was prancing about dangerously near the edge of the wharf, brandishing his stick and hat most furiously. Northwood could not understand it at all; moreover, he had not the time to study phenomena on shore. He gave the crowd on the wharf yet another farewell chorus of blasts from his steam-whistle and settled down to his navigation in earnest.

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Ah! that was the *Hong Ann* rounding the point. Well, the *chinchew* of that packet would soon find that there was nothing for *him* at Kudat.

At last, having got the *Paklat* through the dangers and well out to sea, Northwood felt that he had had a very fatiguing if successful day of it. He would go below and have a nice cool bath, get into clean white ducks, and after a quiet little dinner, perhaps turn in early if all was well. So, leaving the chief officer, Mr. Lowton, in charge, Northwood went below. The first thing he saw on entering the saloon was the graceful form of the Countess Anna van der Piffel fast asleep on a sofa!

The horror-stricken sailor now understood why the Count had been prancing about on the edge of the wharf. Yes! and those other planters *were* shaking their fists at him, after all. Northwood simply quaked as he looked at the attractive picture before him.

"What a d——d row there's going to be!" was his first reflection. "Too much iced champagne!" was his second.

He hurried to the bridge to see if he could get any advice from his chief officer on the subject, but that gentleman merely grinned extensively and repeatedly, while he pointed out the impossibility of taking the *Paklat* into Kudat *that* night.

The unhappy Captain paced his quarter-deck for nearly an hour before he mustered courage to go into the saloon again. When he got there he found the lamps lit and the Countess wide awake.

"So, Captain Northwood," she gaily cried; "so you have carried me away to sea with you! What do you think the Count will say to that? He is frightfully jealous of me!"

Northwood made all sorts of explanations, which the Countess suddenly cut short by saying she was hungry and wanted some supper.

Certainly, by all means, supper would be ready at

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once. It was a lovely night. Should the table be laid on deck? Yes, that was a capital idea. So a few minutes later the Captain and the Countess were sitting down to a nice little supper of soup, fish, chicken and fruit with just a little iced champagne. Meanwhile the ladies' cabin was got ready for the unexpected passenger. Northwood, after regretting that the *Paklat* did not carry a stewardess, bade the Countess good-night, and feeling completely played out, took refuge in a narrow bunk fitted up on one side of his chart-room.

The next day passed off without any incident. The Countess was perfectly amiable and self-possessed, and seemed bent on giving as little trouble as possible to anyone on board. She said she was enjoying the trip immensely.

Towards evening, Northwood had a consultation with his chief officer and Cassim. He wanted to get rid of the unfortunate Countess at the earliest moment possible. What about running the dangers of the short cut through the Mallewalli Passage that night? It would cut down the run by nearly a day and they might even overhaul the *Ho Kwei*—a slow, ill-found tub, whose skipper had never seen the Borneo coast before.

Mr. Lowton said: "No one but you, sir, would think of running the Mallewalli dangers at night. I never heard of its being attempted before, but if you and Cassim like to chance it, I'll stand by you all night, sir."

Orders were given to the chief engineer to raise every pound of steam he could and to drive the *Paklat* for all he was worth. Cassim was sent aloft to perch on the cross-trees of the main-mast, Captain Northwood took his place at the wheel. It was an anxious night as the *Paklat* raced through the Mallewalli Passage, then without any beacons or buoys, and absolutely ribbed with reefs and broken up by shoals. More than once Cassim's keen eyes and piercing cries saved the ship. Before daylight they were through the Mallewalli and steaming safely through the open sea.

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At sunrise a hardly discernible streak of smoke in the far distance indicated the whereabouts of the *Ho Kwei*. The *Paklat* was deep loaded and, as it happened, rather foul; but she began to overhaul the Chinese steamer rapidly. After a time, as the vessels neared one another, the thick volumes of smoke pouring from the funnel of the *Ho Kwei* showed that her skipper began to have some doubts as to the intentions of the steamer astern of him. Evidently he thought it best to get alongside the wharf at Sandakan, where there was room for one steamer only at a time, without delay.

Captain Northwood looked anxiously at the glories of Sandakan Bay stretching out for many a mile before him, but he saw none of its beauties that morning. What he did see was an ugly Chinese steamer making for the wharf. This meant that the *Paklat* would have to lie at anchor until the *Ho Kwei* had done with the wharf, and then, while the *Paklat* was discharging at that same condemned wharf, the *Ho Kwei* would be off to Sulu to take all the cargo to be had at that port. The maddening thing about it all was that if he had left Kudat half an hour earlier—why, ten minutes would have done it!

Then all of a sudden an idea came into his head. He told the astonished Lowton to get the hatches off at once and get the steam winches ready, and look lively about it. Pushing the *jeremudi* to one side, he took the wheel himself. It seemed as if he could do what he liked with the *Paklat*, once he had the wheel in his hands. The *Ho Kwei* was now off the wharf and in communication with the shore. Two of her boats were in the water already, and before long a wire rope and a manilla cable were made fast to the wharf and her winches, with many a slip and jerk, started winding her in very slowly nearer and nearer the wharf.

"Just look at the lubber!" said Northwood, pointing to the broad strip of water which Captain Lusher of the *Ho Kwei* had left between his vessel and the wharf. (It

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was not given to every man to lay a ship alongside a wharf like Captain Northwood.) The *Paklat* was being handled exactly as if there was no *Ho Kwei* in existence, and the berth at the wharf absolutely free. Shouts and yells went up both from the wharf and the steamer as the *Paklat* came clipping through the water. Suddenly there was a violent jerk as the stem of the *Paklat* snapped the *Ho Kwei's* manilla cable, which renewed with greater force as she broke the wire rope. The wharf rocked with the shock, and the *Ho Kwei* rolled lazily in the glassy sea, while Captain Northwood brought the *Paklat* alongside just like a boat. Down went his anchors, his lines were rushed ashore and made fast and while his engines were still going slow astern, Northwood was already roaring out orders to rig the gangways and start the cargo. Mr. Lowton, Ah Ling the *chincheu*, and Cassim were enjoined in the strongest terms to hustle the cargo ashore without a moment's delay and to block up the wharf from end to end with it. "Don't listen to anyone. Take no orders but mine!" shouted the gallant Captain. He had just time to say a few words to the Countess, who was on the quarter-deck, watching the proceedings with much interest, and then he slipped on shore.

He was immediately confronted by Mr. Bunce, the Harbour Master, a very great swell, who affected a quasi-military style and wore a nice uniform surmounted by a regulation helmet with a silver spike.

"How do, Northwood? So you have arrived, I see, but you must get away at once; this berth belongs to the *Ho Kwei*, and you must wait your turn. I absolutely forbid you to land one package of cargo, you understand! Any news?"

"Yes," said Northwood mysteriously. "See that lady on the poop? That's the Countess Anna van der Piffel!"

"The dooce it is!" ejaculated Bunce, who was a terrible lady-killer. "What is she doing on board the *Paklat*?"

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"That's just what I want to explain. Let's go up the road a bit. She can see us here and will know we are talking about her."

While the two men were walking up the road in the direction of Government House and deep in the discussion of the delicate position of the Countess Anna, Northwood's myrmidons were slinging the *Paklat's* cargo ashore at a tremendous rate.

The Captain had just impressed Mr. Bunce with the fact that he must absolutely have tiffin on board the *Paklat* and be presented to the Countess, when he was interrupted by various hoarse bawlings and shoutings which proceeded from a fat man with a very red face and a particularly villainous-looking Chinaman. Northwood, thinking it more than likely that this unpleasant pair of persons might be the captain and *chincheu* of the *Ho Kwei*, shook hands affectionately with Bunce, and, remarking that it was really time he saw the Governor about the private matter they had just been discussing, abandoned the Harbour Master to his fate, while he sprinted up the road to Government House at a rapid pace, in spite of the heat of the morning.

Mr. Bunce speedily discovered that Captain Lusher had been priming himself for the fray with a generous allowance of whisky, and that his language was lurid. After hearing Northwood repeatedly called a "bloody pirate," and other pet names, the unfortunate Bunce had to listen to some sweeping criticisms of the condemned Chartered Company and himself, which were not at all to his taste. They all went to the wharf, where Lusher's *chincheu* started in to *maki* (curse) the native officials in the vilest language, in which his master assisted him to the best of his ability.

A long series of violent quarrels resulted from the highly injudicious tone adopted by Lusher and his satellite, who had their quarrel just, but were defeating their own cause in their blind rage and folly. However, Bunce

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saw that something had to be done, so calling up one of his understrappers, ordered him in stentorian tones to go on board the *Paklat* at once, to insist on her steam-winchs being stopped instantly and to see that the gang-ways were immediately removed.

Captain Lusher, having got satisfaction to this extent, thought it a convenient opportunity to repair to a Chinese grogshop, which he noticed close at hand, just to have a whisky and soda. It was a hot day and he had a lot of trouble on his hands. Meanwhile, the knock-kneed Eurasian official clambered painfully over the piles of cargo which blocked the wharf in all directions, and finally reached the main-deck of the *Paklat*, which was a scene of raging activity. Mr. Pereira had no sooner stated his mission to the second mate than somehow or another a sling of cargo caught him in the small of the back. The luckless Eurasian was so jolted by this little accident that he had to be assisted to the engineers' mess-room, where McCracken received him with tender solicitude and immediately prescribed a nice whisky and soda as the only thing that would do him any good. Meanwhile the *Paklat's* steam-winchs were roaring and rattling as if the devil himself was driving them.

Captain Northwood was not having a particularly good time of it at Government House. His Excellency, who had already heard something of the cutting out of the *Ho Kwei*, was anything but pleased about it. He knew nothing, however, about the escapade of the Countess. So when the Captain, after an uncomfortable pause, said that he was in some trouble concerning which he begged the Governor's assistance, His Excellency made no response.

"The fact is," said Northwood, with some hesitation, "I have carried off the Countess van der Piffel from Kudat, and she is now on board the *Paklat*. It was a mistake, of course!"

"A very considerable mistake, I should think!" replied the Governor, surprised beyond measure.

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"The fact is, I found her asleep on a sofa——"

"Pray spare me any such details, Captain Northwood. I prefer not to listen to them. All that I can say is that for a married man of your age this sort of thing is most reprehensible—deplorable! What an example to set your son!"

"I hope you don't think for a moment that I—er—er——"

"It doesn't matter what *I* think about it, except that I consider the whole thing grossly immoral and scandalous. What the Count thinks about it is quite another matter. He's a dead shot. He can hit a dollar at thirty yards with a pistol. I've seen him do it!"

"Hang it all, Hood!" exclaimed the exasperated Northwood. "Can't you understand that the whole thing is an infernal innocent blunder? I can't possibly take the Countess to Sulu with me or there *will* be a row, and no error! I must land her here, and I want you to ask her to stay at Government House until she can get back to Kudat. It will save appearances and put everything all right if you will but do this little thing for me!"

"What?" shouted the Governor in the extremity of his amazement. "Well, of all the—I admire your nerve, I must say! You know perfectly well that my wife is at home with her mother, and you have the cool courage to propose that I should receive this lady as a guest during Mrs. Hood's absence! Besides, what will the Court of Directors say when they hear of my installing a runaway Countess at Government House? No, thank you! I've got a reputation to take care of if you haven't!"

"Well, Governor," said Northwood in calm despair, "you've been hitting me jolly hard and enjoying yourself no end. If the Countess can't come here, where can she be lodged? I'll go bail she doesn't sail to Sulu with me. If there is no other way I'll land her on the wharf at the last moment and leave her there. She hasn't even a

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change of clothing and hasn't a solitary dollar in her possession. You'll have to do something for her sooner or later, and I suggest you do it now!"

Quite an unanswerable man was this captain, and never seen to better advantage than when he had got his back to the wall!

The Governor reflected a minute and then said: "Well, McWhirter might manage it for you. Suppose you go to see him about it. It's high time I was off to the Government Offices myself."

Northwood demurred a bit. He said he could not stand another roasting from McWhirter, the Colonial Secretary, or anyone else. Time was short. If His Excellency would but settle matters with the Secretary, Northwood offered to call on Mrs. McWhirter and explain everything to that lady's satisfaction. The Governor laughed. McWhirter was a frightful stickler for propriety, and a very sanctimonious sort of gentleman all round, albeit he drew a very nice income from certain houses in the native town which—well, paid five or six times the rent of similar houses in the next street.

Northwood told the Governor that he would step round to the stables to borrow a horse and buggy and drive to the McWhirter bungalow.

"By the way," said the Governor suddenly, "we've forgotten all about that other escapade of yours. What an old pirate you are, to be sure! It appears that in cutting out the *Ho Kwei* you've ripped the winches off her decks and smashed up the Government wharf. All sorts of legal proceedings are being taken against you, as you'll soon discover. Mind you! I'm the Governor of this colony, and don't care a button *who* you are, once things become official. I'd send my own father to Sandakan Jail if he was in your place and all reports are true. Take my advice and try to stop things from being put before me officially. I won't spare you, you understand me. *I can't afford to do it.*"

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"All right, Governor," replied the unabashed Northwood, as he started for the stables. "I'll pay and look pretty. I'll report myself at the Government Offices this afternoon."

Mrs. McWhirter received the Captain very cordially. He had already sent her some books and little odds and ends which she had ordered from Singapore, and she thanked him very kindly for being so thoughtful and nice about her constantly renewed commissions. She was much concerned about the plight of the Countess, without so much as a change of clothing with her. Mrs. McWhirter, good honest woman, never dreamed of the slightest impropriety in connection with the misadventure of the Countess. She was for driving to the *Paklat* at once to bring the lady from Kudat back with her to the bungalow, but Northwood was much too loyal to get the kindly Mrs. McWhirter into trouble with her husband, much as the proposal suited his immediate needs. So he suggested that it was the hottest time of the day and that very likely the Governor would drive the Countess round to the McWhirter bungalow during the cool of the evening. Mrs. McWhirter thought it a splendid idea. Captain Northwood was always so kind and thoughtful about other people. Yes! it would just give her nice time to get the spare room ready and order dinner and things. Refusing Mrs. McWhirter's pressing invitation to dinner, under the plea of a previous engagement, and jumping into the Governor's buggy, Northwood drove off to pick up Bunce, who appeared to have spent the whole morning over an unusually elaborate toilette, with the effect of transforming himself into a perfectly radiant creature in the brightest of new uniforms.

As they got to the wharf, Mr. Pereira addressed his chief with a doleful story. "Please, sir," he said, "they won't stop the winches on board the *Paklat* or let me take the gangways, sir. I told them your orders, sir, and please, sir, they told me to go to——"

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"Oh, never mind!" said Bunce very irritably. "I'm going on board myself." Which was quite true.

The table for lunch was laid in the saloon and looked very cool and dainty. The Countess also looked as cool and dainty as if she had just come from the hands of her maid. She was exceedingly charming, while her manner was sweetness itself. Bunce was enchanted, and to him the tiffin was a meal for the gods. Never had he tasted a better champagne more skilfully iced to a turn. Just as the fruit came on the table a servant slipped a piece of paper into Northwood's hand, on which were pencilled the words :

"Captain Lusher is waiting to see you.—J. LOWTON."

"Ah! I am afraid I must leave you for a little while," said the Captain. "Perhaps you will amuse Mr. Bunce for me during my absence, Countess?"

"I certainly will try to do so if Mr. Bunce cares for music," answered the fair lady, with a glance at the piano.

Northwood left the saloon amidst Bunce's fervid assurances that he adored music more than any other thing in this world.

He found Captain Lusher and his villainous *chinchew* waiting for him on the poop-deck. In answer to Northwood's greeting, the captain of the *Ho Kwei* answered :

"So you're Captain Northwood, hey? A nice trick you played me this morning, blast you! A real dirty dog's trick I call it! But I'll have the law of you both here and in Singapore, and I'll be hanged if I rest until I put you behind the bars! The papers are being got ready now. What have you got to say for yourself, you confounded pirate? You're a nice kind of man, I don't think!"

Captain Northwood's first impulse was to have the brute handed over the side of his ship, but he remembered

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the Governor's warning and kept his temper well in hand.

"I wanted to talk this matter over with you, Captain Lusher," he said, in quite a friendly way, "and it's very good of you to give me the chance of doing so. I propose to apologize and pay handsomely, and as one sailor talking to another, I really don't see why we should quarrel."

"Chuck it! What are you givin' us? Think I'm a fool?"

Just then the *chinchew* spat on the spotless deck. Northwood looked up and noticed that the Chinaman had his pigtail coiled round his head instead of hanging down his back—a mark of gross disrespect.

"Take your *touchang* down!" he ordered.

"Shan't!" retorted the *chinchew*.

Northwood sent for the *serang*, who glanced at the coiled-up pigtail and understood. Next moment the *chinchew* was flung on to the main-deck and was promptly booted ashore by the second mate, enraged at having a dirty Chinaman falling on top of him.

Captain Lusher, who had been watching this scene of violence with the greatest gusto, said: "That's first class! Finest thing I've seen for a long time. Wish I could afford to treat the hound like that! But he's my master, that infernal coolie is! That's what sailin' a Chinaman's ship is like!"

"Well," resumed Northwood, "let us cross over the deck while they wash up where your *chinchew* has spat."

The two men had barely settled themselves comfortably on the starboard quarter, when a portable table was placed before them, on which gleamed tall tumblers and certain bottles.

"A whisky and soda with you, Captain Lusher! You will find the whisky good, and the soda is iced, a thing you don't find everywhere in Borneo."

The skipper of the opposition boat grabbed the whisky-bottle and poured himself out half a tumbler, which he

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topped off with some soda. As he drank it with undisguised satisfaction, he intimated that iced drinks were rare indeed on board the *Ho Kwei*, for the simple reason that his swine of an owner didn't care a tinker's malediction whether his captains died of thirst or not.

After another "peg," Captain Lusher was moved to say that he found Captain Northwood to be a man of his own sort, who had evidently been grossly maligned.

"I was told you was a sort of a dook and a pirate mixed—a kind of man who put on no end of dog! Heard some rot about your running off with a Countess just by way of puttin' on frills. But I speak of a man as I find him. The way you had that cursed *chinchew* handled was a fair treat. I say, you're the right sort, by blazes! and I call you a friend as I can take by the hand!"

Here the red-faced skipper suited the action to the word. Captain Northwood had to submit to this also, but he then started straight to work. He proposed to Lusher to have everything in writing, ship-shape and Bristol fashion. Northwood would give him an undertaking to pay all damages and to assume all responsibility for the events of that morning, for which Lusher was to be held entirely blameless. Lusher was to sign a paper accepting these terms, subject to approval of his owners in Singapore.

"That means no monkey-work in Sandakan," explained Northwood.

"Righto!" responded Lusher; "that's what I call a fair do!"

Captain Northwood slipped into his cabin below, and being a rapid penman, soon had the two agreements written on sheets of foolscap. The bright idea occurred to him to get Bunce to witness these documents. He found that gentleman in earnest conversation with the Countess, and had some little difficulty about getting him on deck. Lusher gazed in astonishment at the brilliant personage whom Northwood had dug up from

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somewhere in a mysterious way, but he signed his paper in a very shaky kind of fist :

“ C. LUSHER,
“ Master, steamship *Ho Kwei*.”

Both documents were then witnessed by Belfield Bunce, Harbour Master, Port of Sandakan, B. N. B.

That terminated the business and Belfield Bunce was free to return to his Countess.

Captain Northwood then discovered that he was awfully busy, and after a parting drink with Lusher, he jumped into His Excellency's buggy and drove off to the Government Offices. He obtained a private interview with Mr. Hood, who told him that McWhirter had made all sorts of objections to receiving the Countess, but had ended by sulkily consenting to do so. He listened with much interest to Northwood's account of his call on Mrs. McWhirter, and said that everything had been excellently done by Northwood as far as she was concerned.

“ Nice woman, Mrs. McWhirter,” added the Governor. “ I'm glad you didn't fall in with her idea of taking the Countess home without her husband's permission. I am sorry he's so sour about the whole affair as it is.”

Northwood urged that if the Governor would but go down to the wharf with his phaeton and pair of cobs, and drive the Countess to the McWhirter bungalow, it would be a great step, and if he would be so good as to accept the McWhirters' inevitable invitation to dine with them, they would be beside themselves with delight, the Countess would be relieved of all possible embarrassment and be received as an honoured guest.

“ You are asking me to do a great deal,” said Mr. Hood ; “ but I believe you are right. After all, it's my business to see that Sandakan society is maintained in a state of harmony. The Count is a valuable man and our leading planter. I'll do what you want. By the way, I hope



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[Facing p. 80]

TO YIMU
AIRBORNE

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you've arranged that other affair somehow, because it looks a very ugly business for you. McWhirter doesn't seem to like you, and he has persuaded some of the others to back him up. I can't help you in this thing, as I warned you this morning!"

Northwood showed him the agreement signed by Captain Lusher.

"That's splendid!" said the Governor with a laugh. "It's witnessed by Belfield Bunce, too! How did you manage that? Pity you happen to be a pirate with such a managing head on your shoulders! Well, you had better hurry up and meet my officials, who are talking of taking out a warrant for your arrest. I expect you will find the lot of them in the Court House next door."

Northwood thanked the Governor most sincerely for his kindness, and incidentally mentioned that he was dining on board the *Paklat* that evening, as he was sorely in want of some sleep.

"That's right! Quite right!" said the Governor. "Now good-bye and good luck!"

Northwood hurried to the Court House, where he found the Colonial Secretary, the Colonial Treasurer, the Commandant of Police, and various minor officials, hard at work with ominous blue forms and law-books. McWhirter was presiding over these genial proceedings.

"Ah! here is Captain Northwood at last. I'm afraid, Major Watkins, that you may have to take some interest in his future movements," said the pleasant McWhirter.

Major Watkins, who was very friendly with Northwood, looked confoundedly uncomfortable.

"Concerning the warrant for the arrest of Captain Northwood," piped a thin little registrar, who was the legal luminary of Sandakan, "for wilfully breaking the laws of the Colony, and of *malice prepense* damaging a British ship and other property, the property of the Chartered Company, I am afraid that we cannot do much

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until Mr. Belfield Bunce, the Harbour Master, and Captain Lusher, the master of the *Ho Kwei*, put in an appearance and make certain statements on oath."

There was a sort of movement in the Court House, and McWhirter said very irritably: "It's most extraordinary that Mr. Bunce should have been missing all day and that Captain Lusher, who was pressing for the arrest of Captain Northwood this morning, should have disappeared also. Do you know where these gentlemen are, Major?"

The Major gruffly replied that when he last heard of them they were both on board of the *Paklat*. This was news indeed!

Northwood had been enjoying this solemn foolery immensely, but when it was proposed to send for the missing parties and bring them to the Court House, he broke the silence he had maintained up to that moment by asking in no very respectful tones what the trouble was.

"As far as the *Ho Kwei* is concerned, Captain Lusher and I have come to terms already. Here is the document to that effect, signed by Captain Lusher and witnessed by Mr. Belfield Bunce. As for the wharf, if I pay for the damage done to it, who has a grievance against me? The wharf sadly wants repairs in any case!"

The little Registrar nearly fainted, while McWhirter turned yellow. Then the lot of them had been sweating all day piling misdemeanours on top of offences, only to come to this lamentable conclusion.

"Nobody can be arrested on the charges made against Captain Northwood. I always said the whole thing was damned nonsense from the start!" growled Major Watkins.

"Wait a minute," piped the ratty little Registrar. "It is one thing to pay for repairs to the wharf, but several things done by Captain Northwood constitute a violation of various port rules and regulations, punishable by various fines. If we only had Mr. Bunce here, who, by the way,

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has been absent all day, we might serve him with a summons at once and have him tried to-morrow."

Northwood turned round to the Registrar and said:

"Do what you like, Mr. Ruggles. Fire away with your summonses and penalize me with any fines you like. I shan't pay! I'll appeal to the Governor and from him to the House of Lords before I pay! I'm tired of your silly system of persecution and won't stand it any longer. Go home."

"By the way," continued Northwood, with a sudden change of tone and manner, "I hope, Major Watkins, that you will dine with me on board the *Paklat*."

"Certainly, with great pleasure," said the Major to the Captain, as they left the Court House arm in arm.

"Well of all the insolence!" groaned McWhirter. "The man's got the Governor, the Major, and the Harbour Master with him—the whole Executive, so to speak, and we can't touch him. I suppose that Northwood can do what he pleases on the Borneo coast. I don't believe Major Watkins would allow him to be arrested under any circumstances. Well, the Governor is going on board the *Paklat* this evening. I think I'll just drive down to the wharf and see what's going on there."

Quite a number of other people found their way on board the *Paklat* directly it was known that His Excellency the Governor was about to pay the ship a visit.

Northwood had the pleasure of presenting His Excellency to the Countess. McWhirter also had his introduction, but hurried off to his bungalow to be ready to receive his guest. Before leaving the ship, however, he had the effrontery to say to Northwood: "You cannot imagine how delighted I am that you will not be troubled with any legal proceedings. You may be sure I did my best to stop them; but, of course, I couldn't show my hand too openly. I think you can quite understand! I *do* hope you will dine with us and the Countess this evening!"

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"Never mind about all that!" said Northwood drily. "I think you will find I can take care of myself. No! I can't dine with you. I am otherwise engaged, as you happen to know. But I have an idea that if you ask the Governor to your dinner, he will accept the invitation."

"Is that so? Thanks for the hint. Well, good-bye. I had better be off home at once!" The delighted McWhirter rushed off to his buggy to convey the great news to his wife without any further loss of time.

The Countess, leaning lightly on the Governor's arm, stopped to bid her farewell to the captain of the *Paklat*.

"Thank you so much for all your kindness and courtesy, which I shall never forget. It was very stupid of me to be overcome by the heat, but the first thing I shall do on reaching home will be to ask the Count what he meant by leaving me asleep in the saloon. I might not fall into such good hands another time. Good-bye, dear Captain Northwood."

The Governor drove her off to the McWhirter bungalow, amidst a general lifting of hats and salutes from sundry Sikhs, policemen, and hangers-on of lower degree. The situation was saved most handsomely.

Captain Lusher, for whom the whisky-bottles of the *Paklat* possessed the same attractions as the cooking-pots of Camacho the Rich had for Sancho Panza, had been making himself conspicuous amongst the visitors by his extravagant laudations of his enemy of the morning, whom he loudly proclaimed to be "a white man," and also "the clean potato." Unfortunately the red-faced captain was gifted with a flow of bad language which might almost be said "to outrun thought and exceed imagination." When he offered to fight any son of an unmentionable quadruped who might have the condemned temerity to say a word against his new friend, it was felt that he was getting a bit of a nuisance, whereupon Mr. McCracken beguiled him into visiting the engineers' mess-

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room. Here the master of the *Ho Kwei* made the comfortable discovery that the mess-room's favourite brand, "The Torchlight Blend," was exactly to his liking.

When the visitors left, Captain Northwood, Major Watkins and Mr. Belfield Bunce enjoyed a quiet dinner aft. Northwood expressed his surprise at the way in which McWhirter and Ruggles had seemed to try to do him a serious mischief. Was it business? Did they wish to drive steamers off the coast of Borneo?

"Wherever the British flag flies," the Major said, "there will always be found some men of the 'Little Englander' type, always ready and willing to aid and abet the foreigner and the aborigine against their own countrymen. It is a malady of our body politic which appears to be incurable. Envy and hatred have an uncommonly rank growth in beautiful Borneo, which is nary Garden of Eden! Lots of people detest you because you are successful, and because the Governor and some other men, like Bunce and me, are your friends. Never mind them, Northwood. McWhirter is a worm and Ruggles is a wormlet. Don't heed them!"

"Bravo!" shouted Bunce. "That's well said. Come, Major, let us drink to Captain Northwood's health. Here's confusion to his enemies!"

The toast having provided an occasion for a refreshing glass of wine, the conversation ran on more pleasing topics. The jolly little party broke up comparatively early in order to let Captain Northwood have some much-needed rest. He tumbled into his bunk, thanking his stars that he was not at the McWhirters' bungalow.

Next morning he said good-bye to his enthusiastic friend, Captain Lusher.

"Well, sir, I've sent you a new wire rope and a new manilla to replace the old things I carried away, and McCracken tells me that he and his people have fixed up your winches so they run much better than before. The rest I will settle with your owners in Singapore. Now

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take my advice. Don't waste time and coals going to Sulu. I am bound to get there long before you and to take all the cargo there is."

"I'm of your opinion, Captain Northwood, and my *chinchew* too. Funny how civil that hound has become since he had that little treat on board this packet. Actually knocked at the door this morning before he came into my cabin, and he wears his pigtail down his back. Well, good-bye and a pleasant voyage! I'll just step in to thank McCracken before I go on board my own bally old frigate."

Having refreshed himself repeatedly in the mess-room with some "Torchlight Blend," poor Captain Lusher settled himself with a weary sigh in the stern-sheets of his gig and went on board the *Ho Kwei*.

The *Paklat* made a good run to Sulu, swept the place bare of cargo and returned to Singapore *via* the usual ports. The voyage showed a pretty good result, but there was a considerable shrinkage of profits, nevertheless, as compared with previous runs. The *Ho Kwei* affair was settled without any difficulty, but still it cost money.

Then the terrible drought which had ruined the rice countries spread to the coasts of Borneo. The sago-forests were so parched by hot winds that the slightest spark set them ablaze and thousands of palms were destroyed by fire. Worse still, the springs dried up, so that the Chinese were unable to wash the stocks of raw material at their factories. An abundance of water is the first necessity for washing sago. As long as there was any cargo to be had Northwood got most of it, but the day came when there was practically nothing to carry. The tobacco and coolie season was over and there was nothing doing. The *Paklat* was run for three successive voyages at such heavy losses that the Captain had to consider his position.

John Grinston had nothing much to say, but Johnnie Northwood was very eloquent. He told his

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father very plainly that the fate of Captain Potter stared him in the face, and that the Woodleigh estate would be in the hands of Grinston and Co. before they were much older.

With a sore heart Captain Northwood paid off his crew and laid up the *Paklat*, leaving the Borneo trade to be fought for by the contending Chinese steamers. But nothing could stop Grinston and Co.'s interest of ten per cent. on the unpaid balance of the purchase-money from piling up while the ship was lying idle.

At one time the *Paklat* was very nearly free from debt, but the losing voyages cost a lot of money, and Captain Northwood had been compelled to advance some thousands of dollars to the sago-factories, on which the distressed owners were unable to even pay the interest during the present bad times. He employed some of his abundant spare time in overhauling his accounts, and found that they had never been quite so rosy as he thought. Certainly his profits were very large, but so were Grinston and Co.'s commissions and charges. He had been quite unused to agents' commissions and interest charges, and now learned what it really was to run a steamer on borrowed money.

Captain Northwood felt the ground slipping from under him, but he kept cool and collected, and watched keenly for any opening which offered a chance for an escape from his dangerous position. But alas! matters seemed to go from bad to worse. The least little bit of employment offering was jumped upon and smothered by a dozen frantic shipowners cutting each other's rates.

After going round the market, Captain Northwood's habit was to take a sampan and be paddled by a Chinaman alongside the *Paklat* for a few cents, when at all events he was afloat on sea-water.

The crew of the *Paklat* was reduced to Cassim and an anchor watch. McCracken remained on board as a sort of unpaid volunteer. He said that it was cheaper than

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living ashore, and that it was no use hunting for a job in these times. So, after seeing his beloved engines oiled and turned, the worthy man spent most of his time in reading the first two volumes of his battered old "Medical Dictionary."

There was always a cold drink on board the *Paklat* for any visitor who presented himself, but such visitors were rare indeed. Cassim's wife had taken up her quarters on board the ship, and used to knock up quite a decent tiffin for Captain Northwood and McCracken. The handful of sailors left were always busy painting, polishing and scrubbing. The *Paklat* was kept in a state of readiness to go to sea at the shortest notice, but that notice never came.

The poor Captain would smoke his cheroot and pace the quarter-deck of his ship, swinging idly to her anchors, for hours together; then he would sit down to read some book or another until sundown, when he would hail a sampan and get away home to Greenwood.

Fortunately the income from the Woodleigh and Ayer Manis estates pretty well paid for the upkeep of the modest Greenwood establishment.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE TONKIN EXPEDITION

THE unenviable situation described in the preceding chapter had lasted for some weeks, waiting a ray of hope to relieve it, when Johnnie, on his way one afternoon to Collyer Quay, happened to meet his old friend the Vicomte Armand Duplessis de Belleville, in the Square. The Vicomte, very proud of the command he had acquired of the English language, hailed Johnnie with enthusiasm.

"Ah! my dear Norsewood! A long time I did not see you! How you was? What you make of yourself all ze time? How dam funny!"

Having sufficiently aired his English, the Vicomte relapsed into his native language. He insisted that Johnnie should dine with him that very evening. Henri Hildebrand, their young Belgian friend, was coming to discuss business of importance, which might interest them all. They were to dine at eight p.m., and Johnnie must positively join them.

The Vicomte's pressing invitation was naturally accepted without hesitation, and Johnnie Northwood arrived at the French Consulate at the appointed time. During the day he had wondered more than once what was on the *tapis*. The firm of Hildebrand and Co. was a very old-established concern, and it was just possible that they might want a steamer like the *Paklat* for something or another. The dinner was finished without anything of especial interest being said, but when the three of them had established themselves in the front

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verandah, Johnnie opened the ball with, "*À propos de bottes, vicomte*, what's all this talk about a war in Tonkin?"

"Aha! my young friend," answered the Consul, "it is precisely about the war that we have met this evening. The Black Flags have crossed the Chinese frontier in tremendous force, and the whole of Northern Tonkin is ablaze. Our Expeditionary Force is in for a very much bigger thing than was anticipated, and there will be some hard fighting on a big scale. Our army is much in want of horses for transport, and I have orders to send a few hundreds of these animals to Haiphong immediately. I have asked Hildebrand and Co. to execute this order, and, naturally, they want a suitable steamer which can be placed at their disposal immediately. When I met you in the Square this morning it immediately occurred to me that you might arrange this part of the business for us better than anyone else, and that both Hildebrand and I could have more confidence in you on a rather delicate business than in some stranger."

Johnnie thought it over for a minute before he said: "Certainly, I can arrange this for you. The *Paklat* is now in harbour ready for sea at a few hours' notice, and as she has large 'tween-decks she will just suit. But it is a risky business, isn't it? I hear that Sir Frederick Dickson refused to allow the French transport *Bien Hoa* to coal in the port yesterday, because he chooses to consider that France and China are in a state of war. Horses for army transport service must be contraband of war. How are we to get them out of Singapore?"

"We must smuggle them, *mon ami*, but the thing must be done, whatever it costs. My reputation is at stake," said the Consul. "As for Sir Frederick Dickson, he is very stupid in his attitude! France has *not* broken off diplomatic relations with China. All the same, these last two days I have had to get the *Bien Hoa* coaled outside the three-mile limit at enormous expense, and a

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delay which is terrible when it is urgent to get our reinforcements to Tonkin without the loss of an hour. Now Sir Frederick advises me that the Marine police have the strictest instructions not to allow a single coal-laden lighter to leave the wharves unless they are satisfied that it is not intended for what he calls a belligerent ship. Let your stupid Sir Frederick watch the wharves as much as he likes. I will show him that we can do without Singapore altogether. The Golconda Company have a five-thousand-ton collier due here this afternoon. That steamer will never anchor in Singapore harbour! She will be met outside the lighthouse and will instantly proceed to Saigon. I have already cabled to our Minister of Marine to send large supplies of Cardiff coal to Saigon and Haiphong direct. We have been spending many thousands and thousands of pounds sterling every year in Singapore, paid to your docks and wharves, coal merchants, provision merchants, pilots, and all sorts of people, besides the large sums spent in the town by our officers and soldiers. Now at last we know better. We shall have our own dépôts at Saigon and avoid Singapore completely. We shall at least have the satisfaction of spending our money in a French colony instead of putting it into British pockets. Thanks to you, Sir Frederick Dickson, I think! As for the horses, we must smuggle them while Sir Frederick is watching the coal-wharves, which we must, of course, avoid. We shall be able to run one cargo only, and buy our other horses elsewhere, in the Dutch colonies for instance, where they are not likely to send good money away. *Arrangez-vous!* It's your affair! I have plenty of money at your disposal!"

Henri Hildebrand then had something to say.

"We can manage this business with a certain amount of caution. It takes a very short time to run a few hundred horses on board, and the steamer must be off the moment the last horse is shipped. Captain Northwood

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knows how to manage such affairs, and it is absolutely necessary that you go yourself with the *Paklat*. We must have someone on board who speaks French. Do not forget that it will be profitable—very profitable indeed—to fill your lower holds with coals and stores of any kind wanted by naval and military forces. Please remember that all arrangements must be concluded to-morrow. Unless we move rapidly all is lost."

After some further discussion of the subject, Johnnie Northwood reminded his friends that the sooner he saw his father about this business the better. So, bidding them good-bye, he started off at a brisk walk homewards. On his road he regretted the officious meddling of Sir Frederick Dickson, which made the enterprise so unnecessarily difficult. The Colonial Secretary's action about the coaling of the French troopships seemed to be the height of folly. To drive away a singularly lucrative trade from Singapore and at the same time to open the eyes of the French Government to the fact that up to the present moment the British had it in their power to immobilize the French fleet in the Far East at any moment of crisis by simply stopping their coal supplies, was not a very sensible act. Generally considered to be a man of much ability, Sir Frederick Dickson did an irreparable mischief to Singapore in this particular instance. The French Government hastened to establish their own depôts and make themselves independent of British supplies from Singapore and Hong Kong, as the Vicomte said they would, to their own great profit and our corresponding loss.

On reaching Greenwood Johnnie found his father wearily pacing the garden, smoking a cheroot. "Hallo, Johnnie!" he said. "You're home very early from the Consul's. Anything wrong?"

"No, father. But there is business in hand which wants immediate attention," and he rapidly sketched out the whole proposition.

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Captain Northwood was much impressed. "Let us go indoors and talk it quietly over. To tell the truth, I am sick to death of this life of inaction. I would give anything to get to sea again. But this scheme of yours brings us no nearer to the Borneo coast!"

"Perhaps it does. What about letting the *Hong Ann* and *Ho Kwei* knock each other to pieces and coming back with money from Tonkin to deal them a smashing blow. Because if this thing succeeds, there is big money in it, which will pay off the mortgage on the *Paklat* in a very short time."

"What if it fails?"

"If it fails, Grinston and Co. will take possession of Woodleigh a few months sooner than they would otherwise. That's all!"

The two men sat silently opposite each other for some time, each of them busily weaving his plan in his brain. Sometimes they exchanged a brief remark as the elder Northwood noted his points on a slip of paper before him. It was finally decided that the Captain should see old Hildebrand and his son Henri as early as possible next morning, and with sufficient inducement, should close the business at once and chance the risks.

"Well, Johnnie, it's getting late, and I must be off at daylight to measure the *Paklat*. I must know how many horses I can cram into her before I see the Hildebrands. Be off to bed, you young villain, and have a good sleep!"

The next day Johnnie was so busy that he could not get away from his godowns, and struggled through his work consumed with impatience concerning what his father was doing all the time.

At last he got back to Greenwood, where he found his father looking very tired but in excellent spirits. Captain Northwood had done a big day's work. He had signed a charter-party with Hildebrand and Co. to carry four hundred horses from Singapore to Haiphong at forty dollars per head—a magnificent freight. It had further been

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arranged that Koh Say Kiat, their old storekeeper of the Battery Road days, was to buy the horses and ponies, nominally on behalf of a Chinese *kongsi*, who were supposed to ship them to Foochow. This kept Hildebrand and Co. out of sight. The *Paklat* had already commenced coaling. McCracken had been to the Sailors' Home and picked up Lowton and one or two other good men. Their old *chincheu*, Ah Ling, had rejoined and Cassim was recruiting a picked crew. It was all over the market that Captain Northwood had wearied of inaction and was off to the Borneo coast again in spite of a particularly rotten outlook.

John Grinston thought well of the venture, but insisted that as the whole affair was full of risk and worry, he must double his usual commissions on the Tonkin business.

"By the way, Johnnie," said Captain Northwood to his son, "they particularly want to see you at Grinston's about the miscellaneous cargo for the lower holds. That's your share of the business! See Billy Grasper about it, the head of their import department, as early as possible to-morrow."

"All right! I'll slip across to see him after I've called on Finlay. By the way, where are you going to ship the horses?"

"I think of making a sort of plank road over the ruins of Jardine's wharf. It's quiet enough there and we'll soon whip the horses on board. Lots of water for the *Paklat* right alongside what's left of the old wharf!"

"That's capital!" cried Johnnie.

Mrs. Northwood, who had been busy hurrying on the dinner before its appointed time, came in with the cheerful news that everything was ready. She said: "I don't suppose you know, Johnnie, that your father has had absolutely nothing to eat or drink the whole day except a cup of tea and a biscuit which I gave him at five o'clock this morning. I really believe you men would starve yourselves to death if you saw a bag of dollars in the

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distance. You wouldn't think of stopping for food if you had to race for that bag of dollars for a week on end. Come along to the dining-room, both of you ! ”

Johnnie Northwood had a terrible time of it when he actually had the audacity to ask Finlay for leave of absence next day. Finlay looked upon his Northwood as a machine whom he could run for seventy hours a week, Sundays and all, without the slightest risk of his breaking down, and here was the machine actually wanting a holiday after only two years' work. He told Johnnie that, having ruined his father once, he was going to ruin him for good and all, this time over a mad scheme in Tonkin, of all places, where a savage war was in full swing. He accused the young man of the blackest ingratitude in wanting to get away from Brownlow's work, which required every minute of his time. Finlay's faith in mankind was shattered. He would never trust anybody again !

In the end, however, Finlay had to admit that sixteen thousand dollars for a five or six days' run was a splendid freight to make in a dead and rotten market, and when Johnnie pleaded that he wanted to save Woodleigh for his mother, Finlay's natural generosity triumphed over his iron principles and he gave Johnnie permission to sail in the *Paklat*. Which was just as well, because Johnnie meant to join the expedition whether he had permission or not. He then went to see Billy Grasper of Grinston and Co. and settled that one of the *Paklat's* lower holds was to be filled with coal, either for sale or as a reserve as circumstances might dictate. The other holds were to be loaded with kerosene oil in cases, canvas, gunny-bags, corrugated iron, cement, paints and oils and a whole assortment of goods likely to be wanted by a flotilla of gunboats, or for the housing and maintenance of soldiers in camp. Billy Grasper said he understood all about it and would start shipping the cargo that minute.

Next morning Johnnie was warned that the *Paklat* would go alongside Jardine's wharf at two p.m., when

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the horses were to be run on board. Directly this operation was over, the *Paklat* was to steam outside the harbour limits to avoid any attempt at arrest by the Chinese Consul or the Colonial Secretary. Johnnie, in the meantime, was to go to the French Consulate, where he would be given despatches for General Rochebouët. Directly he got the despatches, he was to proceed to Johnston's Pier, where a steam-launch would be waiting for him to take him off to the *Paklat*. His part of the affair seemed simple enough. He had been kept fearfully busy all day running between Grinston's and Hildebrand's and generally making himself useful; but after many detentions for indispensable papers at the Belgian firm's office, he was at last able to get to the French Consulate, where he expected to find his despatches ready for him.

Nothing of the kind. He found the Vicomte in front of piles of papers busily deciphering cablegrams from Paris. The Consul asked him to go to the verandah upstairs, where he would find a telescope, and report to him when the *Paklat* passed through New Harbour on her way to her anchorage outside the limits of the port.

At six p.m. he had the satisfaction of seeing her steaming out to sea at full speed, with her decks simply crammed with horses. The principal danger was over, and no doubt the rest would be easy enough.

The Consul was delighted to hear the news, but was deep in yet another despatch in cipher just cabled from Paris. His *chancelier* and clerks were all as busy as possible, and it was evident that the despatches would not be ready for some time. Tired out and starving, Johnnie threw himself into a long chair and went fast asleep. Presently the Consul roused him.

"The despatches are ready! Go, *mon ami*, lose no time! A gharry waits for you."

It was then nine p.m. Taking his bulky package of despatches, sealed up in about forty different places, Johnnie drove off to Johnston's Pier.

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It had been cloudy and squally all day, and the rain now came down in torrents. Johnnie was glad he had brought his waterproof coat with him. Dismal, indeed, was the outlook at Johnston's Pier. Flickering dots of light were reflected fitfully in the wash of water on the plank flooring of the pier. Underneath, the sea sobbed and splashed and angrily sent columns of spray through the interstices of the planks or over the rails. Out to sea all was black, save where a speck of brightness showed the position of some ship at anchor. Johnnie could distinguish nothing beyond the pier while he hailed his launch. Presently a policeman turned up with the information that the serang of the steam-launch had got tired of waiting and had taken his departure about an hour ago. Johnnie's position was anything but enviable. Finally he got hold of a Chinese sampan and put off to sea in search of a steamer of whose whereabouts he had not the slightest idea. The Chinese boatman paddled his slow craft past one steamer after the other until the sampan was clear outside the last of the shipping. Finding that his despatches were getting wet, Johnnie slipped off his waterproof and packed his parcel inside of it, then clearing the Chinaman's little bit of a locker of its pots and pans, put the important package in the only dry place in the boat. He seated himself on the plank in the middle of the sampan in the drenching rain.

The alarmed sampan-man, now convinced that he had got a madman on board his craft, insisted on knowing where he was going. Johnnie told him to go straight ahead, and to keep the Fort Canning light right astern of him. Captain Northwood had said something, he now vaguely remembered, about the flagstaff on Fort Canning being one of the bearings of his proposed anchorage. In spite of his miserable discomfort Johnnie was so exhausted that he felt sleepy and kept nodding. Suddenly he was aroused by a slightly altered motion of the sampan, and on looking up wide awake found the Fort Canning light

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right *ahead of him* ! The wily Chinaman had had enough and had turned his sampan round again. But his passenger would have none of it, and after a violent row, ending in a promise of a lot of money, the unhappy pair resumed their original course.

A little later the weather got as thick as a hedge, the rain fell with redoubled force, a nasty joggle of a sea rose which slopped continually into the sampan and filled it with water. The Fort Canning and every other light were blotted out completely. They were drifting about in absolute blackness in a sampan awash with the sea ! It was a horrible situation, but, fortunately, a Chinese sampan will hardly sink even when full of water, and is difficult to capsize in any circumstances.

The Chinaman paddled a little longer, then he shouted : "*Hai yah !*" and dropping his paddles, sank to the bottom of his boat. Johnnie yelled to him to go on, but the man took no notice. No threats of beatings or promises of dollars had any effect on him. Johnnie began to think that the Tonkin expedition was not such fun after all. Suddenly it occurred to him that the *Paklat* might, in an emergency in which every hour counted, proceed without him and his despatches. The thought made him furious, and crawling aft, he managed to deal the unhappy Chinaman some severe blows about the head in order to wake him up. But the poor fellow simply whined and moaned at each blow without making the slightest attempt to defend himself. Johnnie felt utterly sick. If he could only get out of this infernal mess the *Paklat* might go to Tonkin without him for all he cared.

After a few minutes he braced himself up for another attempt. He dragged the Chinaman into the middle of the boat (it felt like handling a corpse, by the way), took his place in the stern, and standing upright, started pushing the long, fixed paddles through the broken water. He made a very poor job of it, for it wants practice to work a Chinese sampan, but just then an unexpected thing

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occurred. The Chinaman, who allowed the white man to knock him about as he pleased, objected to a stranger handling his paddles. With a sort of howl, he got up and pushed Johnnie into the middle of the boat. Both of them as nearly as possible went overboard as the result of this sudden movement, but Johnnie got safely back to his plank seat, while the Chinaman once more plied his paddles with renewed vigour. Then it occurred to Johnnie that the water-logged sampan was sludging through the water at a much greater rate than a pair of paddles could send it. Undoubtedly a current had got hold of her and was sweeping them somewhere out to sea. Whither? How was this dismal adventure going to end?

While Johnnie was thinking gloomily enough about what might be his fate, he suddenly heard a sound like the clink of a chain. It was very faint, but it was repeated.—clink, clink, clink—just like a vessel heaving short on her anchor. The Chinaman, who was a little deaf, like many of his countrymen, could not hear it, but there was the welcome sound away on their port bow. There was no doubt about it to the other man, gifted with sharper hearing. So the Chinaman steered his sampan in the direction given to him by his mad passenger.

Then the weather lifted a little and suddenly a dim blur of light gleamed on the water. Both men raised a joyous shout, and the Chinaman shoved his paddles with a will. Johnnie tried to hail the ship, but the wind was much too high. However, the Chinaman told him there was a lantern in the locker, which Johnnie found and lit. It was but a little tin thing with glass sides and a bit of candle stuck in it, but when Johnnie held it over his head it served its purpose, for answering flashes from a ship's lantern acknowledged the signal. The Chinaman spun his awkward craft round the stern of the *Paklat* very dexterously. Cassim caught the rope which Johnnie flung to him and another sailor made it fast. Johnnie, with his

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despatches under his arm, jumped for the ladder and was dragged up it through a surging sea by two Malays.

Once he was safe on deck, his father grasped his hand and said : " Thank God you've come ! Do you mean to say you have come through all this in a Chinese sampan ? You are wringing wet and shivering. Lapis will show you your cabin. Go below at once and get into dry things and turn in ! I must be off to the bridge and get under way. Good-night, my lad. I'll see you to-morrow morning ! "

So saying, Captain Northwood was off to his post. Johnnie's first care was to pay his Chinaman twenty bright dollars, which the poor fellow tucked into his waist-band with as much grin as his badly-bruised face would permit. It was, of course, a fortune to him, something like the entire value of his sampan. The sailors had managed to bail out his boat for him, and with repeated thanks he got into it, hoisted his rag of sail and vanished forthwith into the darkness of the night before a wind which was blowing dead on shore.

Getting into dry clothes, Johnnie was irresistibly tempted on deck. Horses everywhere ! Even on the poop-deck they were ranked up on the starboard side—the port side, happily, had to be left free for the working of the ship.

The *Paklat* was now steaming out to sea, and the weather was getting worse every minute. It was now long past midnight and Johnnie, who had not tasted food since the previous day, told Lapis to get him some supper. The little Malay routed out one of the new cabin-boys, an ill-conditioned sort of Hylam ruffian, who presently dumped on the skylight a chunk of cold meat, a bottle of pickles, and a bottle of Bass. He came cursing and departed swearing. The fellow had not bothered to lay a cloth, or to provide any bread, or even a glass. This did not greatly matter. *À la guerre comme à la guerre !* However, Johnnie marked out this delightful steward for future favours. The well-trained servants who formerly

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did so much for the comfort of the *Paklat's* passengers had all been dismissed when the ship was laid up, and replaced by a scratch lot of Chinese loafers at the last moment. The cold meat was very poor stuff indeed, while the pickled onions were only pretty good, but the Bass's beer was all right.

Johnnie had barely finished his scanty meal, when one of the horses tied up on the opposite deck cleared the table for him with a flourish of his tail. Johnnie left the ruins of his supper lying about on the deck, just as the horse had fixed it, then he went below, feeling very rocky inside, and turning into his bunk, tried to get to sleep. But the stamping and incessant hammering of the horses' hoofs overhead kept him awake, in spite of his extreme fatigue. At last he dropped off into an uneasy slumber, when suddenly he was aroused again by a tremendous crash of broken glass followed by a rush of water. Turning on his light, he saw his cabin was swamped and that whatever was left on the floor was afloat. The horses on the poop-deck had kicked away the brass-guards and smashed the ornamental glass work of the skylight. The next sea which came rolling on board swamped the saloon and cabins. Sailors nailing boards round the skylight and baling out the saloon added to the incessant din and racket which banished sleep.

Next morning Johnnie was on deck early enough and found his father still on the bridge, where he had been all night.

"Good-morning, Johnnie!" said the Captain. "Perfectly beastly weather, isn't it? I'm afraid we shall carry it all the way with us to Haiphong, in which case we shall catch a real snifter off Cape Padaran and one or two other spots. No joke, I can tell you, to take a ship through a sea like this with open hatches!"

It was a strange sight! Fore and aft of the bridge was a dense mass of horses swaying from side to side with the heavy motion of the labouring ship. All the hatches

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were wide open and a thin column of vapour curled into the air from them, thrown off by the mass of reeking horse-flesh in the 'tween decks. All the horses were kicking, squealing and savaging each other most mercilessly, and wilfully making their miserable condition much worse than it need be—just like so many human beings. On the forecastle rose great piles of planks securely lashed. Overhead the sky was black and angry, and far and wide nothing was visible but a hideous waste of stormy waters, which surged past the ship in vast threatening masses of mighty waves which seemed almost solid, so dark and huge were they. The *Paklat* was continually shipping green seas. The wind shrieked furiously through her rigging.

Added to these discouraging sights and sounds was a most fearsome and sickly smell, which pervaded the whole ship and was something quite new of its kind. All the decks were thickly littered down with spent lemon-grass from the Perseverance Estate, quite an inoffensive grass when dry, and admirably suited for the purpose of protecting the decks, but when soaked in sea-water and stable manure lemon-grass develops an odour which once encountered can never be forgotten. Johnnie heard the familiar voice of McCracken on the main-deck below, proclaiming his ideas on the subject in tones which dominated the storm. "My Christian aunt! How's this for a stink? We shall be gey and niffy by the time we get to Haiphong, Mr. McKillop—that's to say, if we ever get there, of which I hae me doots!"

Just then Mr. Lowton came on the bridge to take charge of the ship, and the two Northwoods went below to have their coffee and biscuits. They agreed that this was to be no holiday trip, and that they would not earn their bag of dollars quite so easily as they expected. Then his father told Johnnie to run away and amuse himself as best he could while he turned in for a short nap.

The succeeding days passed wearily in extreme dis-

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comfort and no small danger, the weather getting steadily worse all the time. The deep-loaded and hampered ship struggled but heavily and slowly through raging seas. To Johnnie's horror, it took the *Paklat* four days to make Cape St. James, and she was less than half-way at a time when their voyage would have been nearing its completion in ordinary weather. Johnnie advised his father to take refuge in the Saigon River for a day or two, until the culminating fury of the cyclone had passed.

Captain Northwood thought it pretty good advice, and told his son that he would probably wake up in smooth water next morning, so the lad slept soundly that night, lulled to slumber by the prospect of a little respite from the mad raging seas. Next morning, however, he came to life in the same weary welter of storm, and the wind was blowing harder than ever. When he tried to open the saloon door he found it blocked by a dead horse, and had to wait until some sailors carried it away and threw it overboard. His father merely said that he had decided to "hang on a bit," and to continue his voyage up the China Sea.

No regular meals were served, everybody got what they could at odd times, and the living was very rough. Johnnie was much more comfortable than anyone else, however, for he had the whole saloon to himself. One day, when the ruffianly Hylam cabin steward came into the saloon with his pigtail coiled round his head, and literally flung some coarse food on the table, Johnnie got up and dealt the scoundrel a swinging blow on the side of the head which brought him up all standing; then he took the fellow's *towchang* down and gave it some sharp jerks which made him gasp again, after which the outraged professor of etiquette carefully kicked the offending Chinaman out of the saloon into a lot of horses on the main-deck, and went to his cabin to wash his hands.

The hulking Hylam behaved himself much better after this, and by the time he got a few more beatings from

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various others who did not like his manners, he got to be quite a passable "boy."

On their seventh morning out from Singapore, Johnnie went in search of his father as usual, but he was waylaid on the lower bridge by McCracken.

"Mr. Northwood! Your father's been to sleep for the last two hours," said the chief. "Let him be; he wants it. He's not closed his eyes once in these last two days."

Of course Johnnie was careful not to disturb his father and started chatting with McCracken, who, commenting on their frightful voyage, said that the mass of timber on the forecastle was a cause of much mischief. It kept the ship down by the head, held the wind, and played the devil generally with the *Paklat*.

"Lowton's asked your father for permission to cut the whole thing adrift more than once, although he knows you can ill spare the planks for laying an orlop deck which will carry another couple hundred horses next trip. The old man has told Lowton that he'll do it, but he aye hangs on, does the Old Man, and there's that mass of timber on the forecastle yet!"

Just then the *Paklat* fell away, and the two men saw her driving into a vast wall of green water at a wide angle.

"Good Lord! we're done for now!" yelled McCracken. "Hold on to something, sir!"

The whole fore-part of the ship disappeared in the mountainous sea which surged almost level with the lower bridge.

Johnnie and McCracken looked aghast at the scene. After what seemed to be an eternity, but was in reality some seconds, no doubt, the fore-part of the *Paklat* slowly lifted again. First they saw the heads of the horses—then they beheld a cataract of green water pouring into the No. 1 hold mingled with the bodies of horses being washed from the fore-deck into the 'tween-deck. The big stack of timber had disappeared from the forecastle and

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hundreds of planks were being scattered by the storm over the surface of the sea like so many autumn leaves.

"My God!" said McCracken gravely; "yon was a near thing! If those lashings had not parted and set the timber loose we should have been at the bottom of the China Sea by now. You had better tell your father about it, Mr. Northwood."

Johnnie went on the upper bridge, where he found the second officer, Mr. Folsom, as pale as a sheet and almost speechless, while the wretched *jeremudi* at the small brass steam steering-wheel was quaking with fright. Folsom also begged Johnnie to tell his father.

The young man was literally blown into the chart-room directly he opened the door, and the noise he made instantly roused the Captain, who immediately sprang to his feet fully dressed.

"Anything wrong, Johnnie?"

"Yes. We've had a bit of an accident through bad steering."

"All right, come along!" shouted Captain Northwood, as he rushed to the upper bridge.

He soon grasped the facts of the case, and after saying a few sharp things to Folsom and getting rid of the *jeremudi*, turned to his son, and ordered him to take a loaded revolver that he would find in the chart-room and to go below to the No. 1 'tween-deck with Mr. Folsom and shoot any injured animals he might find there. Johnnie shot four horses with broken legs, a sickening job. Some half-dozen others washed off the fore-deck had escaped with no other injuries than a few cuts.

Captain Northwood, declaring that two hours' sleep was enough for any sailor, continued to navigate the ship. The next day the weather moderated a bit, and the *Paklat*, relieved of her load of timber, behaved much better and was much easier to handle.

Finally, on the tenth morning after leaving Singapore,

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the *Paklat* arrived safely at Along Bay, where a French pilot promptly boarded her to the tune of "*Mon Dieu ! quel diable d'odeur !*" That afternoon they were alongside a ramshackle bamboo jetty at Haiphong, tallying out their horses at a great rate. Captain Northwood had his own reasons for being in a hurry. The French artillerymen who took the horses off the ship were in a still greater hurry—they wanted to get away from that smell. The Northwoods got a receipt for three hundred and seventy-eight horses—that is to say, that they had lost twenty-two on the voyage, which was a remarkably good result considering the weather they had experienced. Some of the unfortunate animals were seen to fall as they were being driven off; the whole lot of them seemed to have pretty well reached the limit of endurance.

"Another twenty-four hours at sea would have cooked us," remarked Captain Northwood.

A group of officers on the river bank ordered the captain of the *Paklat* to come to see them, as they did not care to go on board. He was told by the captain of the port to return immediately to Along Bay to cleanse his ship. The Frenchman said that if any of that litter was thrown into the Haiphong River, he would order the gunboats to open fire on the *Paklat* and sink her.

"It seems that we must humour the caprice of those funny Frenchmen, since they threaten to sink us if we don't," said Northwood to his son; "but it's really extraordinary that they should have such an objection to the smell of lemon-grass!"

General Rochebouët having gone to the front, Johnnie delivered his despatches to an officer, who gave him a receipt for them and promised that they should be sent to the French Commander-in-chief at once.

Along Bay was wrapped in mists and rain when the *Paklat* returned there, and there was not much to be seen but a few islands and some cruisers and gunboats. The work of cleansing the *Paklat* was taken in hand with a

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will. Such a washing, scrubbing and holystoning went on as can hardly be described ; but wash and scrub as they might, there was still a complicated aroma of lemon grass and ammonia which hung about the ship in a subdued form, and which Captain Northwood declared to be most refreshing.

Next morning they left Along Bay for Haiphong. Ah ! the luxury of steaming in smooth water in a clean ship ; the pure joy of no longer living amidst foul smells and the deafening hammering of the horses' hoofs. Everybody on board breathed freely once more and trotted about the ship as jolly as a sand-boy.

The *Paklat* was anchored off the town of Haiphong, at that time an exceedingly muddy and uninteresting-looking place. Captain Northwood thought it a suitable occasion to get his people together in the saloon and thank them for having done their duty so manfully during the voyage now happily completed. The pilot and some French officials who had come on board were also invited. After a brief speech from Captain Northwood, everybody sat down to be regaled with as much champagne and biscuits as they wanted.

"It's very decent of the Old Man !" said McCracken to McKillop on their leaving the saloon, after having mopped up about a quart of champagne apiece. "He means well, but yon 'simkin' is but fushionless fizzie stuff at best, and I'm thinkin' that just a wee tot o' 'Torchlight'——"

"Aye !" said McKillop simply, as he sprinted to the mess-room.

Johnnie did his best to entertain and amuse the Frenchmen, who took to their champagne and biscuits very kindly and were much pleased with their reception. But they evidently thought that the *Paklat* was a very extraordinary ship.

The necessary formalities having been settled, Johnnie was sent ashore to cable their arrival and transact other

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business. A private message had been despatched to Mrs. Northwood by the pilot on the previous day. The poor lady had been terribly anxious about the fate of her husband and son until the welcome telegram arrived, telling her they were both safe and well and sent her their best love.

Everybody in Singapore had looked upon the *Paklat* as a lost ship. The gossips at McAlister's talked of the China Sea having broken loose, and said that Captain Northwood had been too clever for once and had taken just one chance too many. No doubt the Captain and his son had gone to the bottom this time! Grinston and his trusty lieutenant Billy Grasper, were deep in insurance policies and claims for ship and cargo, which had been very fully insured, when Johnnie's telegram advising the *Paklat's* arrival, the number of horses landed, and other details, upset their calculations.

Johnnie thought Haiphong a very queer-looking place as he walked through it on his way to the office of their agents, MM. Freycinet Frères. It was a tumble-down, muddy collection of houses and shanties, swarming with soldiers and natives, but there was not an ordinary civilian to be seen. Having found the Freycinets' office, he walked into it and was very cordially greeted by the manager of the Haiphong branch, M. Horace Vernet.

The office, consisting of a fairly large-sized room, served not only as the *salle à manger*, but, temporarily at least, as the bedroom also of his friend Henri Hildebrand, whom he found lying in an iron cot near the copying-press. Henri had reached Haiphong two days before in the M.M. mail-boat *Menam*, which had arrived with her decks swept, her saloons washed out, and in a sinking condition. The young Belgian was still suffering from the effects of a nerve-racking voyage, but somehow Johnnie's appearance seemed to revive him a bit.

"Aha!" said Vernet. "You have brought him to life again! You must dine with us at five o'clock and

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see if you can get Henri to eat and drink something."

They then talked business. Vernet said that so many of the horses landed by the *Paklat* had died, that there was a good deal of talk on the subject.

Just then General Dupont walked into the office to express his views concerning this affair. They all went to have a look at the horses, which they found turned loose on a barren bit of land with scarce a blade of grass on it. Johnnie urged very pointedly that although the horses had been severely tried on their terrible voyage, they had at least been fed and watered regularly—he had seen to that himself—but if the French Government chose to starve the horses he landed, he could not be held responsible. The General growled at the artillerymen in charge of the horses and insisted on their being fed and watered immediately.

Vernet said it was high time they were fed themselves, and they thereupon returned to Freycinet Frères' buildings, where the dinner-table was being laid in the office. General Dupont explained that pack animals were required to follow the army with ammunition and stores instead of the large force of Annamite coolies employed for the purpose, who not only carried a very light weight per man, but were so lost to every sense of decency, that they invariably dropped their loads and bolted directly they heard the rattle of rifles or the sound of the guns. It was expected that pack animals would carry more and behave much better than the coolies—who amongst other bad qualities, were inveterate thieves, ready to loot anything and everything at the first opportunity. Johnnie represented to the General that the horses they had just seen would satisfactorily replace many hundreds of coolies if they were properly fed and rested for a few days, but he suggested that for pack animals mountain ponies would be found much hardier and handier than the horses picked up in Singapore. In this idea General Dupont was

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much interested, and the basis of a new contract was practically agreed, to be confirmed after consultation with Captain Northwood the following day.

As they were sitting down to table they heard the clatter of a sword and the clink of spurs down below, while a rather ropy tenor voice sang :

“ En livrant mon cœur—mon cœur à Bacchus
Je me fais haïr par le fils de Vénus,
Lorsque je bois, mon cœur est en paix,
Quand je fais l'amour il n'y est jamais ! ”

“ *Tiens ! C'est de Fontailles qui arrive !* ” said the General. A young artillery officer entered the room, who, after saluting the general and everybody else in due form, immediately clamoured for something to drink—he must have an *apéritif* at once, *absinthe* for preference.

Everybody then took an *apéritif* just to whet the appetite for dinner. There was a great array of them in different coloured bottles with bright labels. Johnnie took a small glass of a highly advertised alcoholic drug, which immediately took all the steel out of him and left him a wreck. The stuff had a vile taste, and besides burning a hole in his stomach, caused something or other to go snap inside of the wretched young man. He felt too weak to commit suicide, but thought seriously of hiring somebody to murder him. With lack-lustre eye and sad surprise he witnessed de Fontailles despatch in rapid succession an *absinthe*, an *amer*, and a *quinquina*, after which the young artilleryman declared himself to be ready for dinner.

Johnnie was partly revived by some really excellent soup, and, later, was practically set up by half a bottle of a fine Bordeaux, when he was knocked over again by a wave of sweet champagne, which swept the table in his own especial honour. The Frenchmen, however, all got exceedingly jolly and a bit noisy. Henri Hildebrand, flushed and excited, for the first time forgot the horrors of his passage on the *Menam*.

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No sooner were the coffee and liqueurs served than de Fonteilles declared that it was high time they went to the Café de la Paix to get something to drink, a proposal received with a roar of laughter and unqualified approval. With great difficulty, and in spite of the most urgent entreaty of de Fonteilles and the rest of his hospitable friends, Johnnie managed to get away from them and return to his ship. As he got into the deserted saloon of the *Paklat* he savoured with satisfaction the lovely quiet and repose to which he had been so long a stranger. Lapis had provided clean sheets for his bunk, and as Johnnie undressed and slipped himself between them, he felt really happy and went off into a sweet sleep.

Next morning he was up bright and early, a giant refreshed. After coffee and a chat with his father, he took Ah Ling in hand. The *chinchew* had been round the market and found it most promising. Before long some Chinese and Annamite traders would be on board to do business. Kerosene in cases, candles, canvas, flour and all sorts of other things they had brought from Singapore, were in much demand and would fetch high prices.

Johnnie asked Ah Ling for his quotations, which were big enough in all conscience ; but knowing his man, young Northwood laughed him to scorn and insisted on raising him at least another twenty-five per cent. !

After a little demur Ah Ling admitted that it might be possible to put up prices to this modest extent. He asked for the particulars of a large number of cases, of which the marks and numbers were down in the manifest, but merely noted as "merchandise." Johnnie retreated to the saloon to make an abstract of Grinston and Co.'s invoices for Ah Ling's guidance. There was a big mass of these papers, which Johnnie had to condense into a couple of columns on a sheet of foolscap. Rapidly noting the invoices, he kept up a running comment on them. Kerosene, flour, canvas, etc.—all first class and with a good one hundred per cent. or more in them.

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Cement, nails, screws, chains, etc.—not so saleable, say a mouldy fifty per cent. on this lot. Then came Turkey red cloths and other goods of the kind, which might or might not go well. Finally at the end of the thick pile of papers were invoices for cases of jews' harps; cotton umbrellas; feeding bottles; hairpins; lithographs in gilt frames; fancy wools; beads; toothcombs; surgical instruments; concertinas; Somebody's soothing syrup; cough-drops; trombones, and religious works assorted.

What an assortment to add to the stores required for an army in the field and its supporting fleet! Was it expected that the French regiments would march to the melody extracted from thousands of jews' harps? Supposing the commander-in-chief could be induced to equip each soldier with a jews' harp and a cotton umbrella, what on earth was to become of that intolerable shipment of hairpins for instance?

Johnnie felt certain that Grinston and Co. had never come into possession of these cases of religious works by purchase, but some amiable, if fat-headed, society at home had perhaps forwarded them through Grinston and Co. for the benefit of British sailors, who simply love this kind of literature. That this theological fodder could be of any use to a French army was impossible; but it was, nevertheless, invoiced to Captain John Dillon Northwood for sale.

Johnnie, thinking over the thing, fancied he understood. It could not be supposed that the Northwoods were such flats as to pay these invoices, but Grasper had evidently cleared out all the unsaleable odds and ends lying in Grinston's godown since long years, and shipped them on board the *Paklat*. The goods might sell, or the ship might go down, and then there would still be no loss, as they would be insured.

There was no thought of selling their shipment of Cardiff coal. In fact, Captain Northwood was already getting it transferred from the No. 1 lower hold to the

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bunkers. Having burnt so much more coal than anticipated on the voyage, the Northwoods were fortunate indeed to have this large reserve of fuel for the next cruise of the *Paklat*.

While the coaling operations were proceeding, Johnnie and Ah Ling had transformed the ship's saloon into a regular bazaar. Samples of their goods were displayed on the long dining-table. The Chinese and Annamite traders had come off in numbers. It was a very jolly way of doing business. The traders had brought big bags of dollars with them and paid for what they bought directly their purchases were made. Johnnie gave the buyers an order on the chief officer for the goods they bought, and they were forthwith loaded into their own cargo-boats, by which craft the *Paklat* was surrounded.

By eleven o'clock Johnnie had sold quite as much cargo as could be delivered that day. Profits ranged from one hundred per cent. to one hundred and fifty per cent. Having squared Ah Ling's accounts and packed up some thousands of dollars, which were crammed into the ship's safe, Johnnie closed the market for the day and went ashore with his father.

Before the day was over a contract was signed between Freycinet Frères and Captain Northwood for a cargo of four hundred ponies to be delivered at Haiphong for eighty dollars per head, the said ponies to be shipped at Sulu or such other islands as Captain Northwood might select.

There was money in such a contract. Captain Northwood was on very friendly terms with the Sultan of Sulu, who had only to say the word and the ponies would be got cheap enough.

"Ah!" said the Captain to his son. "If I had been able to hang on to that deck-load of timber, I could carry another two hundred ponies—at eighty dollars per head making sixteen thousand dollars, of which at least ten thousand dollars would have been clear profit!"

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"It's lucky," quoth Johnnie, "that we've been able to hang on to our lives! *Maskee*—ten thousand dollars!"

The next morning Johnnie re-opened his bazaar under stringent orders from his father to clear the ship and let him get away to sea without delay. Business was proceeding briskly in the saloon-market when suddenly Horace Vernet put in an appearance.

"*Bon jour!*" he said curtly. "What is all this? I have just heard of your floating bazaar and have come to see it for myself. I thought Freycinet Frères were your agents, and now I find you doing business behind my back. I suppose the next thing I shall know is that you have established yourself at Haiphong in competition with me after you have learnt the secrets of my office. I suppose that this is what you English call *business!*"

Johnnie was much surprised to find Vernet in this irritable and suspicious frame of mind. The fact is that Vernet was making money at such a prodigious rate that he scented opposition everywhere and was jealous to a degree of any poaching on his preserves.

Johnnie warmly denied any intention of competing with Freycinet Frères, or of establishing himself at Haiphong. He was surely entitled to sell anything brought on speculation from Singapore to any person he pleased.

Vernet thereupon said that if Northwood was sincere he would immediately hand over the rest of his cargo to Freycinet Frères, with an undertaking in writing that the Northwoods should in future do no business in Tonkin except through his firm.

Johnnie tried to explain to Vernet that part of his cargo was absolutely unsaleable, but this aroused the Frenchman's suspicions again, and finally getting weary of the scene, young Northwood said:

"*Très bien, Monsieur Vernet!* Since you insist upon it, I transfer you the rest of my cargo on condition that you pay me a ten per cent. profit on the invoices now on the table, and send your boats alongside to take delivery

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of the goods to-day. As for the letter you require that shall be signed and given to you at once, but if you are disappointed with your bargain, don't blame me!"

Vernet said he would take his chances, and if Monsieur Northwood would make up his bill he should have a cheque on the Banque de l'Indo-Chine for it that day.

The letter was drawn up to Vernet's satisfaction, signed by both the Northwoods, and ratified by a cordial hand-shake all round over a bottle of champagne. Ah Ling was instructed that M. Vernet had bought the balance of the cargo, and that he must close his bazaar. Urged by Vernet, Johnnie then and there sat down to make out his account against Freycinet Frères. He thought the whole matter could be settled afterwards when Vernet was in a less excited state. In the meantime, as the Frenchman insisted upon it, he got his account to the amount of some ten thousand dollars, for which Vernet handed Johnnie his cheque later in the day.

Captain Northwood was anxious to get away to sea, and did not care much about the trading part of the venture. Still, he was surprised to find that Johnnie could pretty well finance the next cruise out of the proceeds of his cargo and remit practically the whole of the *Paklat's* big freight to Singapore.

By dint of hard work the *Paklat* was got ready for sea by the following morning. Johnnie was to stay behind at Haiphong, and amongst other things, to have the timber for the orlop deck ready for the succeeding voyage.

He bade good-bye to his father on leaving the *Paklat* for the shore.

"Just another successful trip, father, and we shall be able to pay off the mortgages on the *Paklat* and the Ayer Manis estate, and keep Woodleigh into the bargain!"

"All right, Johnnie!" answered the Captain. "Take care of yourself in Haiphong!"

Next minute the *Paklat* had started on her voyage to Sulu.

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Henri Hildebrand had had the great good fortune to secure for Johnnie the *paillote* of an officer who had gone to the front, and took his English friend round together with his baggage to instal him in his new quarters. The *paillote* was but a crazy bamboo hut, of one room a few feet square. The furniture consisted of a camp-bed, of which the linen was exceedingly foul, an empty packing-case, which did for a toilet-table, and held a somewhat battered tin pan and a squat liqueur-bottle full of muddy water—the said squat bottle having in happier times contained yellow Chartreuse. There was also a rickety chair in the hut, and that was the lot. Henri, who hadn't to live in the *paillote*, was enthusiastic about its advantages.

"Really, you are lodged like a *général de division*!" he assured Johnnie. "Also, the Café de la Paix is quite near!"

Having done his best to clean up his new home, Johnnie repaired to the Café de la Paix to have his *déjeuner* and to look round Haiphong. The café was so crowded with officers of all arms that it was by no means easy to get a seat, but although the place was merely a big barn, the cooking was excellent. The café was practically never closed for business; it was as full all night as it was crowded all day, and its proprietor was making a fortune which would entitle him to adorn the most elegant, exclusive and expensive society of any civilized country in the world.

Haiphong, now a handsome city, was a very mean-looking place at the time of the war. The French were cutting wide streets through the native quarter, and were pulling down houses standing in the way in such numbers that the town looked like a heap of ruins. A few large brick houses, built by vanished mandarins, were occupied by the French military and civil authorities, and a few French firms like Freycinet Frères occupied quite extensive buildings for their offices and warehouses. The rest of

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Haiphong lived in huts, which straggled in untidy profusion over an area of what was baked mud in dry weather, and utterly impossible mud when it rained.

Of soldiers there were thousands, in every variety of uniform. The splendid spahi, the dashing zouave, and the workmanlike soldier of the *infanterie de marine* rubbed shoulders with the turco, the adventurer of the Foreign Legion and the ruffianly *joyeux* of the convict companies. Then there were sailors from the fleet, and the Annamite *links*, effeminate-looking little creatures, with long red streamers hanging from their plate-like hats, and red sashes round their waists, the most queer-looking of all the extraordinary soldiers serving under the French flag in Tonkin.

The discipline of the different regiments was as varied as their uniforms; but, taken all round, there was a great deal of disorder and licence amongst the soldiers encamped at Haiphong.

Here Northwood would come on a knot of soldiers belonging to some Algerian regiment drinking. A large pitcher with a spout to it, filled with wine, was passed from hand to hand. Each soldier lifted the pitcher high over his head and tilted it until the wine poured in a steady stream into his open mouth below. When the wine splashed inside the drinker's stomach for about a minute, the soldier next him took possession of the pitcher and repeated the performance. Not a drop is wasted. An Algerian regiment will empty as many as a thousand pitchers of wine without losing half a thimbleful of liquor. It is a system which permits a general use of one vessel for drinking purposes in an absolutely cleanly way. It dispenses with cups or glasses, a great convenience when troops are on active service. But Johnnie thought it a funny way of having a drink, and it required a certain amount of steady practice. It is a trick which the Algerian troops have learned from the Arabs.

Perhaps the very next sight would be that of a military

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funeral, soldiers and priests escorting a long string of a dozen or more roughly-made coffins to the cemetery. The French troops were suffering severely from disease, and the percentage of deaths amongst the wounded brought in from the front was very heavy.

Johnnie took a very keen interest in everything relating to the army. It was the first time he had seen a force of thirty thousand men on active service. Wandering about their camp he saw a good deal of brawling and fighting going on amongst the men, which the officers did very little to check. The lines of the Foreign Legion re-echoed to the sounds of every tongue of Europe. Johnnie heard an undoubtedly English voice, but, alas! it was raised in anger, and the owner of it was cursing a German comrade in such precise terms, that it did not seem to be a time for cultivating his acquaintance. The Foreign Legion is a strange regiment, of which the ranks are open to any able-bodied man of any nationality. No questions are asked when a man joins. The Legion always fights well and has rendered many a service to France in different parts of the world.

Indeed, it might be said that all the troops in Tonkin were good fighting men, who showed much courage and endurance under very trying conditions.

The extraordinary *tirailleurs annamites*, who looked hardly big enough to carry their rifles, were a mixed lot according to various accounts. Some of them, when well led by French officers, would fight like heroes all day in a vile paddy-swamp against heavy odds, while others could not be got to face the music at all. However, it is difficult to imagine how the French could have got through the campaign without their native regiments. Johnnie had not been long in Haiphong before he heard stories of officers who were much too quick with their revolvers, and of soldiers who shot their officers the first chance they got.

There was at that time in Haiphong a large open space

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of broken ground bordered on all sides by buildings of sorts which was known as the *Carrefour des Ecrasés*; at least that was the popular and picturesque name of the place. The theatre was situated on one of the corners of this waste. It was one of the simplest theatres in the world. The stage consisted of planks laid over empty barrels, and the seats all over the house were just planks. But the front rows fetched good prices, and a capital troupe from Paris kept large and critical audiences amused and happy. One night Johnnie went to see *Le Piano de Berthe* played, and was enjoying the performance very much, when the sounds of a tremendous row in the *carrefour* outside grew louder and louder. The officer sitting next him got very fidgety, and after saying something about sacred pigs of soldiers who were always fighting each other, he slipped out of the theatre, followed by Johnnie.

It was a very sudden change of scene—a fight between the sailors from the fleet and the soldiers of some regiment to which they had taken a dislike. Very likely liquor was at the bottom of the whole thing. Over quite a large area some hundreds of men were fighting each other in confused lines and groups, and apparently without any object except that of killing each other. Johnnie was watching the fray in the dim light of a dull night, when he suddenly heard the quick tramp, tramp of troops marching fast, a sound to which the rioters unfortunately paid no heed. Next minute a company of zouaves charged across the *carrefour* at the double. They kept their alignment perfectly, and cleaved their way through the fighting men with the butts of their rifles, which seemed to swing mechanically from right to left and back again, and to strike men to the ground without the slightest effort. It was all over very soon. The zouaves reached the other side of the ground, formed fours, and were marched off at once. The sailors and soldiers who had recently been fighting each other, were flying in all directions and disappeared as quickly as the zouaves themselves. But

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there were many who remained—silent, motionless figures, which dotted the surface of the *carrefour*.

It was truly astonishing to see what enormous loads the French troops carried when they marched to the front. Besides their rifle, bayonet and cartridges, they carried a heavy knapsack and some part of a *tente d'abri*. Various articles, such as a water-bottle, a pair of spare boots, a pot or kettle, were hung on to them. The whole burden was usually topped off with a seven-pound tin of Australian beef strapped on top of the knapsack. The entire kit rose higher than a man's head, so that, viewed from the rear, nothing was seen of the soldier as a rule but a pair of short legs supporting a burden which might have filled a small cart. The spectator could not but admire the ingenuity with which such a load of discrepant objects could be securely packed on a human back. How the troops managed to march long distances under such conditions in the tropical climate of Tonkin was another marvel. Evidently transport was much wanted. The more ponies the *Paklat* brought, the better for the army.

The day following the night of the military riot outside of the theatre was a wet one. The rain simply fell in sheets, and all Haiphong floated in mud, which steamed and smelt villainously. Johnnie found that his hut leaked like a sieve. There was no difficulty in having a first-class and much needed wash under a roof which acted capitally as a shower-bath. He filled his liqueur bottle and tin basin with clean water. Then, feeling much refreshed, he waded through the mud to Freycinets' office, where he spent the rest of the day.

Towards the afternoon Vernet took him to a corner of the office where there was a pile of samples of the goods *ex Paklat*.

"Come here, *mon ami*, and behold! You have 'put me inside' like a child. I have never yet seen a type similar to yourself! Confess that you are not an *anglais* but a Yankee badly disguised! You have made me

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pay you an enormous price for hundreds of cases of old nightingales (*vieux rossignols*), and such nightingales! From what museums, what pawnbrokers, what ragshops did you get this collection? When Henri made me the translations he laughed like a whale all the time. He still laughs, but I do not. I doubt of my senses! Of course, with your usual perfidy you told me not to be disappointed. It is always well not to be disappointed! But am I come to Haiphong to become a philosopher? I suppose I must look like one. Explain yourself, mister! I am your humble servant!"

Henri Hildebrand was roaring with laughter during the tirade, and Johnnie was sorely tempted to join. Having with great difficulty preserved his gravity, he remarked that the present was ideal weather for selling one hundred and twenty cases of umbrellas, and calmly suggested that Vernet should supply the rest of the stuff to the Government.

Horace Vernet, perfectly crimson with rage, but still preventing himself with a violent effort from shooting Johnnie Northwood with his revolver, replied: "Ah, yes, the umbrellas! Well, I have sold them. I had not the slightest idea the aborigines were so desperately fond of cotton umbrellas. They have all gone at a good price.

"But the other things! How can I ever propose to General Dupont that he shall buy jews' harps and feeding-bottles for the army! Will you yourself make such propositions to the General? I am sure he will be delighted and have you hanged immediately. The brave General does not admit jokes on service."

Johnnie Northwood expressed his regrets and said that he was willing to take back any unsold goods when the *Paklat* returned to Singapore, and leave it to Vernet to make him such allowance as he thought fit for cancelling their bargain.

"*Mille tonnerres!*" exclaimed Vernet. "It is im-

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possible to catch you ! You know perfectly well I insisted on this affair and you put me in one impossible situation after another ! I admire your infernal courage. It is something colossal—titanic—monumental ! Another would say you have the impudence of all the devils. Well, we will wait. *Nous verrons !* ”

Oddly enough, the whole lot of this unpromising inventory was taken over by the Government that very afternoon without troubling General Dupont about the matter at all.

As the afternoon wore on, the rain simply deluged Haiphong, and Vernet's office was veiled in a sort of dirty twilight. The atmosphere was sodden and depressing in the extreme.

At their usual hour Vernet, Henri and Johnnie sat down to their dinner. Albeit the meal was excellent and the wine as good as could be wished, the three men felt dull and hipped. They could not resist the leaden melancholy which enveloped the whole great camp at Haiphong like a vast wet blanket.

Presently they heard the blare of a bugle pierce the watery curtain outside, and the measured tramp of troops rapidly approaching.

“ A regiment returning from the front,” remarked Vernet. “ Poor devils, what a march they must have had in this weather ! ”

Nearer and nearer sounded the rhythmical tread of the soldiers, until the three men rose from the table to see them march past from the windows of their room. Just as the head of the column reached the end of the street a hoarse order to halt brought it to a standstill, and with a left half-turn the battalion occupying the whole length of the street faced Freycinets' buildings in dripping ranks.

“ What the devil is this ? ” gasped Vernet.

Next minute three officers, soaking wet, hungry and irritable, stood in the room in a widening pool of water.

“ Monsieur Horace Vernet ! ” said a lieutenant-colonel.

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Vernet immediately stepped forward, begging the officers to be seated and refresh themselves.

The lieutenant-colonel waved his hand impatiently. "Monsieur Horace Vernet, you are required to find quarters for eight hundred and forty men immediately!"

Vernet was more than surprised, he was indignant with the cavalier tone of the officer.

"*Bien, mon colonel!* If you can put eight hundred and forty men in this room, pray do so. It is all the space I possess."

"Nothing of the kind! You have warehouses on each side of your house."

"*Oui, mon colonel!* but they are filled with goods!"


"I cannot help that! my men cannot stand in the rain all night. Clear your goods out and make room for my men!"

"*Pardon, mon colonel,* but I absolutely refuse!"

"Very well. My men will not take long to fling your rubbish out on the river-bank. They know how to make themselves comfortable in worse quarters than these."

"At your own responsibility, colonel. You may do exactly as you please. I cannot resist a battalion of soldiers."

The officer did not even deign to make a reply, but followed by his comrades clattered down the staircase. The column was immediately marched round to the back of the warehouses on the river bank, where the soldiers having piled arms, broke open the doors without any ceremony and started clearing out the building, the contents of which they flung into the mud on the river bank.

Johnnie watched whole piles of cases marked  with various other letters and numbers added, being got rid of in this singularly expeditious military manner. Some of the cases slid into the swollen river and floated away on their voyage to an unknown market.

Johnnie Northwood surveyed this scene through the

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blurred window panes, and then a light broke in upon him through the gloom. "My dear Horace Vernet, it seems to me those goods are sold to the Government sooner than we expected!"

The Frenchman grinned and rubbed his hands together as he answered: "So it appears! If soldiers throw my goods into the river somebody must pay, I suppose!"

The soldiers, having settled themselves in one of the few weatherproof buildings in Haiphong, started to cook their dinners and were as happy and comfortable as possible, judging by many a jovial song and chorus and a dim roar of cheery voices. The officers found their way to Vernet's quarters to proffer their apologies and to stay to supper.

Johnnie slipped into his waterproof and getting out of the stifling atmosphere trudged back to his *paillote*. His bed was soaking wet, but finding a dry corner big enough to protect his head, he slept in his waterproof coat and boots that night—and slept well. Were there not thirty thousand other men as badly or even worse off than he? *À la guerre comme à la guerre!*

Next morning he found Henri fast asleep in his cot by the copying-press and Vernet busy making up accounts.

"*Ah! vous voilà!*" said the Frenchman. "Give me a hand with these accounts. Just read out your own invoices to me in French, will you?"

Johnnie did so, and Vernet sat scribbling. When the task was finished, Horace had to greet General Dupont, who had just come in and was ready for a cup of coffee. Johnnie took the liberty of looking at the sheet of foolscap left on the table and fairly gasped. Truly Vernet was more than a genius! He was a magician, an alchemist, who could transmute the basest materials into silver and gold. To his admiration Johnnie found that his hairpins were "galvanized wire," feeding-bottles "porcelains," and "Religious Works," "papeterie."

When General Dupont had gone, Johnnie suggested

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that the goods were *his* and offered Vernet a ten per cent. commission for collecting the money. But the Frenchman laughed gaily as he twitted Johnnie with being a Turk, Jew, and an Arab.

"*Mon ami!* you would deprive me of my honest gain so painfully acquired. Well, you have my cheque for ten thousand dollars, have you not? And now you want all the rest! No, I may be a philosopher, but there are limits to my philosophy. Besides, you are already robbing the French Republic until it makes me blush to look at you!"

That afternoon the rain ceased, and Johnnie, being much in want of exercise, took a stroll along the right bank of the Cua Cam, a broad, shallow and muddy stream, at that time not much better than an open sewer. Presently he came across an unusual spectacle, which appealed to him strongly. About forty yards from the shore some snags had grounded on a mud-bank. An Annamite sampan had got inextricably fixed in the river trap, a matter of no interest but for the fact that an exceedingly pretty French lady and a perfectly beautiful child were passengers in the crazy craft. Evidently the lady was *somebody*, for everybody, including one or two generals, saluted her most respectfully as they passed. Some of them shouted words of encouragement and even talked of sending assistance as they went their way. Johnnie inquired of a corporal when he thought the hapless pair were likely to get out of their wretched predicament.

"*Mon Dieu!*" said the soldier. "Perhaps when the tide rises in three or four hours. By that time the mists will rise, and that will not be good for the lady or her child."

Johnnie waited a little, and thinking of what he called "the Good Samaritan pidjin," took off his boots and stockings, rolled up his trousers, and started wading out to the sampan. It was no easy work, but he got alongside the boat all right and proffered his services as he

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lifted his hat. The lady, perfectly cool and collected, said she would be glad if monsieur carried her little daughter ashore. This being done, to the delight of the child, Johnnie waded back to the boat and offered to carry madame to the bank. She demurred a little, until her rescuer mentioned mists and fever and the little child waiting for her.

"Very well!" said the lady. "I will risk it!" and so saying she rose in the sampan and slid herself into his arms. From that moment the slimy ooze and the rushing waters of the Cua Cam were nothing to the young man. How supple and graceful she was—no weight at all—what a charming face, what eyes, what a superb head of hair, what a goddess, in fact! thought the silly youngster as he carried her through the turbid flood. All too soon he reached dry land and set the lady of the sampan on her feet in the midst of an applauding crowd. The lady thanked him very graciously, took her child by the hand, and walked off on the arm of a very gaudy-looking colonel, on whose breast glowed the crimson ribbon of the Legion of Honour with its glittering cross.

Poor Johnnie, left slimy and stinking on the river bank, viewed the departing group with mingled feelings. He thought that the lady might have told him who she was, or, at least, have taken the trouble to find out the identity of her rescuer. As for that confounded colonel, he might have got his decoration for something or another, but he had not got the pluck to wade into the Cua Cam! Picking up his shoes and stockings, our quixotic youth walked back to his hut barefooted, made up the clothing he wore into a bundle, which he put outside his door in the hope that some predatory Annamite would be good enough to steal, and started to scrape and clean himself.

It occurred to him the following morning to see about getting the orlop deck ready for the *Paklat*. He inquired of Horace Vernet where he could buy his timber. The Frenchman regarded him with much compassion. "My

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poor friend," he said, "there is only one firm in the place with a stock of timber, the *maison* Pierre Corneille. It is a concern composed entirely of Turks, Jews and Arabs. They are terrible people. They live in a large place—well, the Forest of Bondy was also a large place in which numbers of people were robbed and killed. The organization of bandits, known as Pierre Corneille, do everything. They charter ships for the Government, they supply the Government with coals, with water, with everything. I verily believe that they make our unhappy Government pay them for the very inferior air our troops breathe! Go, my child, go and see these honest people. You will probably fall into the hands of Paul Schmidt, otherwise known as the Terror of Tonkin. Go and be thankful if you return alive!"

Vernet evidently does not like his competitors, thought Johnnie as he went on his errand. The concern trading under the name of Pierre Corneille evidently did things on a big scale. They owned a fine big wharf in front of their extensive buildings, where two steamers were discharging their cargoes. They were much more important people than Freycinet Frères on the face of it. Entering a large office occupied by a numerous staff, Johnnie stated his business to the first-comer, who promptly led him up to a fine, bald-headed, rather benevolent-looking person, no other than Paul Schmidt, the Terror of Tonkin.

"Well!" said this gentleman in some perplexity. "We have some timber, but our stocks are small, and I believe General Dupont requires them. I think this is a case about which it is necessary that you should see madame!"

"*Madame?*" asked Johnnie.

"*Oui, monsieur!* Be so good as to pass this way." So saying, he led the way up a short corridor, tapped at a green baize door, and ushered Johnnie into a large and handsomely furnished room. In the centre of the room was a large desk, at which sat a woman bent over a pile

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of papers apparently in deep thought. Johnnie noticed that she had a glorious head of hair, but her face was invisible. M. Schmidt waited a minute, and then said : "*Pardon, madame ! mais voici monsieur.*"

The woman looked up and sprang to her feet with a cry of recognition. Johnnie took her proffered hand and kissed it with devotion.

Paul Schmidt disappeared, and left them alone in the room. She was the Lady of the Sampan ! Replying to Johnnie's inquiries, she said : " It is so truly good of you to call and inquire about my health. I have been reproaching myself continually that I left you so hurriedly and without so much as telling you that I am Madame Corneille, but I have been hoping ever since that you would not fail to discover me. If my daughter and I are quite well to-day it is entirely thanks to your kindness and courage. All our friends passed us by, and it was for *you*, the stranger, whom we had never seen before, to deliver us from a horrible and dangerous position."

Madame Corneille added a melodious voice to her other charms, and, of course, Johnnie could have listened to her all day. However, the Terror of Tonkin was there to see that no one wasted too much of her time, and after he had intruded his bald head once or twice to say something about *affaires urgentes*, our young friend told madame what his errand really happened to be.

" Ah ! you wish to buy timber ! Well, we have some Oregon pine, but not much. We really do not want to sell it, but I would not like to disappoint you. Pray, for what purpose do you require it ? "

Johnnie pulled out his sheet of measurements and explained his business in a few words.

" Ah ! So you are the Englishman who is supplying horses to the Government. My congratulations. I hear it is a regular gold mine you have discovered. But why didn't you come to Pierre Corneille—to *us*—with this

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business? Could we not serve you as well as Freycinet Frères, or better?"

Johnnie Northwood explained with a sigh that he had not been a free agent in the matter, but the sigh did not melt the fair lady in the slightest. On the contrary, her face took a hard and even cruel look as she said: "Very well! I will sell you fifty tons of Oregon pine at one dollar and a half per foot!"

"One dollar and a half a foot! But that is not a price, madame!"

"It happens to be *my* price, monsieur, and you will either take it or leave it. You *must* have the planks. You can easily afford to pay twice my price. Do you accept my terms?"

"Yes, madame," said Johnnie, feeling remarkably like a lost sheep.

Madame deliberately wrote out the order for the timber and handed it to young Northwood, who thereupon withdrew into the outer office under the cover of a polite and ceremonious bow.

"I did not know that madame had the pleasure of your acquaintance," said the Terror of Tonkin, as he looked over the delivery order. "By the way, that little sign in red ink here means that madame prefers payment in cash before delivery!"

"*Romance is dead!*" muttered Master Johnnie to himself as he stepped into the open air.

Divesting his thoughts from his rather painful experience of the Lady of the Sampan, young Northwood took notes of a part of Haiphong which he had never seen before. One of the steamers at Corneille's wharf was discharging coals, and the other a cargo of flour. Both were from Hong-Kong. Walking along the river bank with the skipper of the collier, he was amazed to see great stocks of coals and briquettes roasting and disintegrating in the sun. A little further was a huge pile of flour in bags left under the open sky and soaked by the recent rains, rotting

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unheeded. More astonishing still were tiers of wine-casks left piled in the blazing sun until the staves fell apart and the wine either soaked into the ground or ran in little red streams into the river.

"What hideous, wicked waste!" exclaimed Johnnie, perfectly horrified.

"Well," observed the Hong-Kong skipper, "some of these Tonkin people know how to run a war! All this stuff will have to be ordered over again, and that means a lot more commissions and cumshaws to be divided up amongst certain people who've come here to make money. They're after the dollars all the time, and don't you forget it. So much the better for my owners amongst others!"

The Hong-Kong skipper said that the Governor of that Crown Colony placed no restrictions whatever on coaling French warships or exporting coal to Tonkin. Why the Crown Colony of Singapore should forbid the coaling of French transports even outside the three-mile limit was more than he could understand. He called it "a mug's game," and made various remarks concerning the destruction of a profitable trade, which was not at all complimentary to the intelligence of certain very exalted personages autocratically governing the island of Singapore and its dependencies.

Johnnie returned to Freycinets' office feeling dispirited and tired, but only to fall into the hands of Horace Vernet and Henri Hildebrand. The Frenchman looking intently at his victim congratulated him on his return from the Forest of Bondy. So the Terror of Tonkin had spared his life! That was something, indeed it was much. But no doubt our young friend would require some money shortly, most people who went to see Paul Schmidt needed money, it was observed. How was Paul Schmidt? Did he say anything about Freycinet Frères?

Johnnie, who was in no mood for chaff, simply said that he had bought so much timber from Madame Corneille

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and that he would be much obliged if Vernet would take delivery and pay for the planks.

"Ah. So you have seen our *belle Hélène*! That is an honour not given to every one. But you are making remarkable progress, mister! She is a beautiful woman who is making enormous sums of money at Haiphong in order that her husband may live in his own style in the less debilitating climate of Paris. It appears that he enjoys himself enormously at Paris, the old fellow! But you seem to have gone from Scylla to Charybdis. Sirens sing expensive songs, don't they? What is this? One dollar and fifty cents per foot for Oregon pine? *Miséricorde*! What a harpy? Poor young man, what will papa say? I should say papa must be a difficult man when he gets in a violent rage. Undoubtedly he will beat you, thrash you and fustigate you until your skin smokes again—*usque ad putorem*!"

Henri, who could laugh long and loud on occasion, roared and brayed like a jackass the whole time at Vernet's remarks until their bedevilled victim suggested that they should all go and have a bock at the Café de la Paix, where they would be sure to meet a lot of other people and change the topic of conversation.

Returning from the café, Henri said to Johnnie: "Did you hear that an officer was shot dead on parade yesterday by one of his men? It was Captain Herbette. He was, until recently, a lieutenant in the 70th, but exchanged into the *Zéphirs* to get his captaincy. He, it appears, has been too hard on his men, and four of them settled, by means of a pack of cards, who was to kill him. The *zéphir* who shot Herbette has confessed everything. The courtmartial decided that it is no use shooting such fellows, they would only enjoy it. So the four men have been put *en crapaudine*, and will endure that torture until they die in agony. The men are suffering now. Will you not come with me and see them?"

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Young Northwood naturally refused to witness any such horrible spectacle.

The *Compagnies de Discipline*, otherwise *les Zéphirs* or *les Joyeux* of French military slang, are recruited from the "hard cases" of the whole French Army. They are men who, having proved themselves impervious to all discipline and defiant of any ordinary punishment, are weeded out of their regiments and embodied in convict companies to be treated as irreclaimable criminals. The following notes on these extraordinary soldiers may be of some interest.

BIRIBI.

The convict companies are scattered over the dreariest and most desolate districts of the French African possessions, in which they are often employed in road-making and constructing buildings for military purposes. Harassed, moreover, with constant drills under a burning sun, badly fed, isolated from all but their own miserable society, and punished with the most relentless severity for the slightest offence, the unhappy soldier realizes what it is to be *envoyé à Biribi*. The derivation of the word *Biribi* seems to be obscure, but its meaning soon becomes clear enough to the victim of the system.

To the soldiers of the convict companies active service is a pleasant relief from their well-nigh intolerable bondage, and considering that they suffer such terrible punishments as the *crapaudine*, which can easily be prolonged to a fatal issue, it is small wonder that they are merciless men. They are perfect adepts at "eating up a country," and leave a trail of desolation and ruin behind them wherever they go.

These men are sent to bear the brunt of the fighting; any especially dangerous work will be thrust upon them if it is possible to do so; and to render justice to these troops and to say at the same time all the good that can be truthfully said about them: they fight well, and certainly are not wanting in courage. Still, such troublesome, dare-devil regiments have never been brought together under any flag. Half the time the men are a perfect terror to their officers; while, on the other hand, the officers are allowed to punish their men with a savage severity which would never for a moment be tolerated in the regiments of the line or any other branch of the service.

Take the case of a man sentenced to the *cellule avec fers*. The *cellule* may be any hut or tent, or for that matter, the open air will serve. The irons consist of two heavy rings on a bar about eighteen inches long;

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the whole thing screws up and is fastened by a padlock. The man's ankles are shackled by the rings to the bar, and the contrivance is more fit for chaining up a wild beast than a man. In addition to this, however, the man's hands are brought behind his back, and fettered by two rings moving on an iron rod worked by a powerful screw, so that any pressure desired may be brought to bear on the man's wrists. This is also secured by a padlock. The man thus put in irons is placed on his stomach; he gets his *gamelle* of soup once in thirty-six hours, and a litre of water every twenty-four hours, which he has to lap up like a dog if he wants it.

The *crapaudine*—obviously derived from the word *crapaud*—is simply this punishment made much more severe and dangerous by having a rope rove through a ring provided for this purpose. One end of the rope is made fast to the bar to which the man's ankles are ironed, and then a good pull on the rope running through the ring at the man's wrists brings his hands and feet together behind his back, when all is made fast, and the sufferer is left in that position. If he cries out he is immediately gagged.

Should the man not be released in time he generally dies in convulsions, it is said; but a man thus treated may die from any cause, and at times he has been known to quit this world when it has not been the intention of his officers that he should do so.

From "Sidelights on the Discipline of the Troops employed by France in her Colonial Conquests." By John Dill Ross.—*Chambers's Journal*, March 2nd, 1905.

Suffice it to say, that in the case of the four men concerned in the murder of their officer their punishment was pushed to its extreme limit. They died after prolonged and atrocious agonies on an open piece of ground in the midst of their camp, and before the eyes of their comrades.

De Fonteilles, discussing the thing with Johnnie at the Café de la Paix, said: "What can we do? We have lost officers enough shot through the back by their own men in the midst of a skirmish—by cowardly assassins who can never be identified. But when it comes to an officer being picked off on parade in open daylight some kind of action has to be taken. It is absolutely no punishment to shoot *Zéphirs* for such crimes. They and their comrades simply laugh at it. They don't in the least mind being shot, a

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painless death, over in a second, but the most reckless man amongst all these scoundrels trembles at the *crapaudine*, and no wonder! Two of those men were Parisians. They got off pretty easy after a few bad hours. They had no stamina. The third man, a peasant of some kind, died during the night after about thirty hours of it. But the fourth—a sort of Corsican brute—the man who actually fired the shot—stood it for forty-eight hours. He must have been as strong as an ox. I prefer not to describe his end, which I happened to see, but all I will say is that the men of his regiment will not forget it in a hurry. The devils are going about with white faces for the first time in their lives!”

De Fontailles then began to chatter and laugh in his usual mad way about all sorts of things, but Johnnie felt dull and got away to his miserable hut as soon as he could decently do so.

The unexpected news of the defeat of the French Army at Langson caused a great sensation at Haiphong and much gossip. It was said that the officer who took command after the gallant General de Négrier fell wounded gave the fatal order for retreat at the moment of victory. The sinister tidings were received at Haiphong without panic, and produced no other feeling than a determination to avenge the disaster that had befallen the army.

In Paris, however, the people went mad over the affair, the mob wanted to tear Jules Ferry to pieces, and the Minister saved himself from their clutches only by an undignified escape through some window or another. The mere fact that General de Négrier had been severely wounded at the battle of Langson and that the officer next in command happened to be a poor soldier, very illogically brought about the downfall of Jules Ferry's government.

There were troops enough and to spare at Haiphong, but the difficulty was to maintain a large army in the field

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in such a country as Tonkin with hardly any roads and insufficient means of transport. The Commander-in-Chief, however, immediately began to organize reinforcements on a large scale and prepared to proceed to the front himself in command of these columns, when the welcome news arrived that the *Paklat* was already on her way from Along Bay with a cargo of ponies, which would come in remarkably handy for the movements of the troops.

Johnnie lost no time in getting on board the *Paklat* as she steamed alongside the jetty at Haiphong. He found his father looking the picture of health and in great spirits. He had made a splendid voyage in ideal weather. The Sultan of Sulu had provided him with four hundred hill ponies—fine, strong animals—at the absurdly low price of nine dollars per head. He had lost but one solitary animal during the voyage, and landed three hundred and ninety-nine out of four hundred ponies shipped. Some officers who came on board to inspect the ponies expressed their unqualified approval of the sturdy little beasts.

While Captain Northwood was dressing to go on shore, Mr. McCracken ranged up alongside Johnnie and in a voice that could be heard all over the ship, began to bray his congratulations. "Grand, I call it! Just grand! A fortune in a trip. Nine dollars a head, mind ye! Nine dollars!"

"Oh! do shut up, McCracken!" Johnnie retorted hastily. "The less said about prices the better! Let us hope that none of these Frenchmen understand English. If you have any spare time on your hands read up Cholera in your medical book, under the letter C. There's lots of it in Haiphong!"

Captain Northwood turned up a tremendous swell in a new silk hat and a well-fitting frock-coat. Such a brilliant civilian had never yet been seen in Haiphong, where men like Vernet and Paul Schmidt went slouching about in the cheapest of old clothes. Everybody took the Captain for some very important personage—a commissary-

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general at least, perhaps the Lieutenant-Governor from Saigon. Who was to know? Every officer and soldier saluted him as he passed, and a stray civilian or two humbly stood with their hats off while he strode past them. Captain Northwood punctiliously returned these honours with a stately and military touch of his hand to the brim of his refulgent silk hat.

"What do you do that for?" asked Johnnie, highly exasperated.

"I like it, my boy, I like it!" calmly replied his father, as he graciously returned the salute of a colonel.

That afternoon Johnnie left his father at Freycinet's office while he went to send a cablegram to Singapore. He passed the Café de la Paix on his way to the telegraph office, and perceived to his annoyance McCracken in front of a long drink holding forth to a group of officers. He could just hear a foghorn voice roaring: "Nine dollars, vous savvy, Johnnie Crappo! Nine dollars, vun piecee pony, mossoo!"

Johnnie cursed the indiscreet McCracken as he hurried out of sight. He feared it meant mischief.

At dinner-time Horace Vernet was put out and gloomy. For some reason General Dupont was impossible to deal with, and talked of ponies which were bought for nothing being charged to the Government at exorbitant prices. Johnnie told them what happened at the Café de la Paix as he passed the place that afternoon. Vernet, who was unaccountably pessimistic, said that that settled the question. As long as everything was kept quiet all was well, but once General Dupont knew that good ponies could be got at nine dollars, he would pay only such a price as made the business practically worthless. He strongly recommended Captain Northwood to be content with what he had already made and to return to Singapore without any loss of time. There was absolutely nothing more to be done in Haiphong.

Captain Northwood agreed that Vernet's advice was

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sound. He regretted that the planks for the orlop deck, now alongside the *Paklat*, had been purchased. He also mentioned that he had bought a hundred tons of a very excellent coffee at Sulu for which there would be doubtless a good demand at Haiphong. As for ponies, there were absolutely no more to be got at Sulu, as the natives refused to supply them. It was only thanks to the Sultan that as many as four hundred ponies could be got for the *Paklat*.

Vernet appeared to be much pleased and relieved on finding Captain Northwood so completely in agreement with his own idea about bringing the Tonkin expedition to an immediate termination. Undoubtedly the coffee from Sulu represented a very large quantity, but it happened to be much wanted for the troops, and Vernet promised to sell it at a high price the very next day. The sample handed to him was, as he declared, of such a quality that French soldiers were much to be envied.

Johnnie left Vernet and his father to do all the talking while he watched and listened. Somehow Vernet's talk sounded hollow, and the younger Northwood noticed that when Henri Hildebrand was about to say something about transport for the army, he suddenly dried up under a warning glance from Vernet. Evidently there was something wrong, but Johnnie held his peace, and tried to look happy and amiable. Immediately after dinner Captain Northwood declared his intention of going on board his ship, and Johnnie said he would sleep on board the *Paklat* in preference to his rotten *paillote*. Vernet had a lot of work to do, so he let them go. Henri Hildebrand, who had an immense aversion from labour of any kind, said he would take a stroll with the Northwoods as far as the river and get a sampan for them.

Within five minutes of their leaving Freycinets' office, Captain Northwood, who was fully alive to the situation, extracted from Henri the very interesting information that Grinston and Co. had arranged with Hildebrand and

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Co. and Freycinet Frères to send a thumping great steamer called the *Millicent* to Haiphong with no less than two thousand Burmah ponies. Further, that Paul Schmidt, of the *maison* Pierre Corneille, had been telegraphing right and left, and was now offering thousands of ponies at almost any price. According to Henri, the market was smashed; it had had its brilliant but brief career, and the rest was mere mud!

Henri had no sooner ended than he met a very pretty young woman coming in the opposite direction, with whom he was evidently on the best of terms. There were ladies both of the *beau monde* and the *demi-ditto* in Haiphong. Suffice it to say that Henri shamelessly turned his back on the Northwoods and escorted his fair friend elsewhere.

"Save me from my friends," Captain Northwood said. "No wonder Vernet wants us to go back to Singapore. We've been 'had' with a vengeance! Well, we have made a lot of money, when all is said and done, and we have paid for the *Paklat* by this time; but I should dearly like to make just one more such trip to the Java coast, so as to put me quite independent of Grinston and Co. I had planned a voyage to Taliewong Bay which would just set everything right!"

Johnnie tramped in silence by his father's side, revolving plans. He bitterly felt the action of his father's agents in ruining his father's market for their own benefit. In a less degree he resented the treachery of the Hildebrands and Horace Vernet. His fighting blood was up; his dogged perseverance and his born instinct for battling with difficulties were aroused. When they reached the river bank, he said to his father: "Take that sampan and go on board. I will go back to the Café de la Paix and find out what I can. I shall be on board some time to-night, and we can talk things over to-morrow morning early."

"All right, Johnnie," said his father cheerily. "Fix

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up just one more voyage if you can. If *you* can't do it, no one can do it!"

At the Café de la Paix Johnnie found de Fonteilles with some of the officers of General Dupont's staff, just the men he wished to meet. They hailed him with enthusiasm. He promptly organized a nice, expensive little supper, which starting with a lot of aimless and sufficiently scandalous babble, was at the right moment made the scene of an animated but profitable discussion about the supply of pack animals for the army. Johnnie admitted that by an extraordinary fluke his father had got a cargo of hill ponies, strong and serviceable, at nine dollars per head, but he represented the cost of running the ship, of feeding four hundred animals, and the risks of such a venture in a vivid light. Then he struck out a new line altogether. Why should not the Government buy their own ponies? Why not send their own *commissaires* on board the *Paklat* to make the necessary purchases themselves? Would M. de Fonteilles and his friends come on board the *Paklat* at eleven a.m. tomorrow to a little *déjeuner à la fourchette* to discuss a trip to the beautiful island of Java? The idea, which had many reasons to recommend it, seemed to be particularly grateful to a group of officers wearied to death of inaction amidst the mud-flats of Haiphong. Moreover, the rainy season was coming on, and cholera was gradually increasing.

Next morning an excellent *déjeuner* was served in the saloon of the *Paklat*. Quite a number of officers sat at the long table over which Captain Northwood presided. In due season Johnnie brought out his proposals for a voyage to Taliewong Bay, in Java, a lovely country, with mountain ranges at the back of it, in which the finest ponies could be got in abundance. Captain Northwood would guarantee that the French *commissaires* should buy six hundred ponies at a fair price to be fixed by themselves. The saloon and twenty cabins should be at their

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exclusive disposal, their own private quarters for the voyage. A liberal table, with wines *ad libitum*, would be provided free of cost. If any invalid officers of any arm of the service would like a sea-voyage to Java and back, they also would be welcome without payment of any kind. The *Paklat* was to be run on a freight basis only to carry six hundred ponies at forty dollars per head. Negotiations to be direct and without any reference to Freycinet Frères. An agreement to this effect was there drawn up, and Johnnie got it signed by General Dupont that afternoon, to his father's delight and the immense chagrin of Horace Vernet and Henri Hildebrand.

On leaving the ship de Fontailles said to Johnnie: "I am very pleased you have arranged matters so well. You can understand that General Dupont is *not* pleased to hear that you buy ponies at nine dollars, for which he pays one hundred and fifty dollars!"

So the cat was out of the bag at last! Vernet and Hildebrand were making seventy dollars per animal without hazarding a halfpenny or stirring out of Haiphong, while Captain Northwood was getting eighty dollars to run the steamer, pay all expenses, finance the deal and take all risks! The Northwoods were now sufficiently edified on the subject.

Vernet, conscious of his treatment of the Northwoods, touched but feebly on the subject of the letter signed by them in all good faith, in which they engaged to confine their transactions to Freycinet Frères. But Johnnie fairly cowed him with an outburst of genuine indignation; and, what was more, he showed up the seamy side of the *Millicent* venture, which Vernet had overlooked in his greed.

"Two thousand animals are too many to put on board any steamer. Burmah is a long way off. You don't know what Burmah ponies are like, neither do I! But I'll bet you one hundred dollars that at least half of them will die on the road. Very likely most of them will die! Where are you then? Why didn't you stick to us? Isn't

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a trifling commission of seventy dollars good enough for you? You have killed the goose with the golden eggs, my friend. Well, we are nearly finished with Tonkin, and as there are no honest people in Haiphong apparently, I offer you five per cent. on the Java trip without any assurance of my esteem, merely to interest you in this last affair, and to keep within the spirit, if not the exact terms, of the letter which I signed. Do you accept, Vernet, or shall I go to see Paul Schmidt?"

Vernet accepted. He looked very much ashamed of himself, and putting on a shocking old hat, shambled off to the Café de la Paix to "distract himself."

Next morning Vernet was his old cheery, jolly self again, and as friendly with the Northwoods as if he had never had a difference of any kind with them. He was really intended by Nature to be a very decent soul indeed, but the immoral atmosphere in which he lived, the society of robbers and plunderers, the ease with which money could be made in Tonkin by indelicate means, had been too much for him. But, nevertheless, he was the best Frenchman in business at Haiphong. Johnnie wanted to reform him, and might perchance have been of some use in a commendable work, had he not felt that he wanted to be reformed pretty considerably himself after a few weeks in Tonkin.

Captain Northwood was, as usual, eager to get to sea, and there was great activity at Freycinets' office. The coffee had been a most fortunate speculation, and about paid for the expenses of the Sulu voyage. Vernet made a commission of four thousand dollars in about half an hour on the sale of it.

Captain Northwood wanted to know why Master Johnnie had been paying the price of mahogany or rosewood for pine planks.

"*Cherchez la femme!*" insinuated Vernet, whereupon the history of the Lady of the Sampan, or an abridgement thereof, had to be recited.

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"Strange," mused Vernet, "that a perfectly lovely creature should rob a nice young man for the needs of an old goat who spends her money in Paris!"

"She is a business woman," commented the Captain.

"Hang business women!" ejaculated Johnnie, to the amusement of his seniors.

All points now being settled, Captain Northwood reminded his son that it was high time that he got back to Singapore, where Finlay was doubtless much in want of him. Johnnie said he would go by the next M. M. steamer to Saigon and then to Singapore.

Vernet was much concerned when he found that he was going to lose Johnnie Northwood so suddenly, while Captain de Fontailles declared that he would not have thought of going to Java in the *Paklat* unless in the society of his English friend.

Later in the day Vernet seriously asked Johnnie if he would not stay in Tonkin and join the service of Freycinet Frères. What would he accept as a salary?

Johnnie pondered the thing over for a minute and then asked for five thousand dollars per month.

"Why so much, my friend?"

"Well, I must have some sort of compensation for the ruin of my system of morality consequent on serving in Tonkin. Already I can hardly see a man without wanting to rob him."

"Go, my friend, go! We have no use here for a man who talks of morality! And yet you have a real vocation for robbery, as you have just admitted, perhaps unconsciously. You and I would have worked very happily and profitably together. We should have put up some brilliant things and become very rich. But I see you have other ideas, and that I must be alone. You had better sail by the *Arethuse* for Saigon."

Having bid farewell to his father and quite a number of French officers, who sailed in the *Paklat* for Java, Johnnie Northwood took his own departure shortly after-

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wards in the M. M. steamer *Arethuse*, feeling that his part in the Tonkin expedition had been well and faithfully done. He was glad that the peril and fatigue of this venture were over, and that it had resulted so successfully. If he had ruined his father, he had now done something to make amends. Captain Northwood would once more be able to go back to the Borneo coast a strong man, with money wherewith to fight his competitors.

To Johnnie the accommodations of the French mail packet seemed a miracle of luxury and comfort after the hard time he had been having of it for some time past.

There was a battalion of *infanterie de marine* on board, being sent back to Saigon on account of the heavy losses they had suffered during the campaign. They had lost their colonel and three out of four of their captains. The remaining officers and men looked very fit and hard, in spite of long fatigues and privations. Their commanding officer, Captain Martin, was a fine, tall, handsome soldier, of a gay and cheery disposition, whose principal grievance appeared to be that he had been through four dangerous and trying campaigns in Senegal, New Caledonia, Tunis and Tonkin, without being rewarded with so much as a silver medal for his services. On the other hand, the Resident of one of the districts had just received the Cross of the Legion of Honour for his complaisance in lending his wife to that celebrated warrior General X., which was duly gazetted as "distinguished services."

The *Arethuse* arrived at Saigon after a perfectly splendid passage. Johnnie was received with every possible kindness by M. Freycinet, who offered him considerable inducements to enter the services of his firm.

After a couple of days spent very happily in Saigon, young Northwood left for Singapore on board of the M. M. steamer *Ilissus*.

It seemed strange to Johnnie to find himself in Singa-

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pore again, and to return to his servitude at seventy-five dollars a month. He felt as if he had been living in a far country for ages. His mother was amused at his ecstasies over the spotless cleanliness of Greenwood. What a breakfast he ate, to be sure! The rest of Singapore appeared to be flat and tame enough. No soldiers, no fighting, no great game of making a few thousands of dollars in a few minutes. Why hadn't he accepted Vernet's offer? What game, he wondered, was Vernet up to at that precise moment?

With such thoughts running through his head Johnnie entered Grinston and Co.'s godown. Grinston was quite civil to him, and was interested to learn the particulars of the *Paklat's* third charter, which he said was excellent business. He did not think it would have been possible to put through a third charter, as Hildebrand and Co. had sold a huge cargo, which had been shipped by the *Millicent*. Johnnie cheerfully predicted a disastrous voyage for the *Millicent*, that her ponies would die like flies, that her skipper would no doubt have endless trouble with the authorities and might have to do a month in quarantine. To Johnnie's huge delight Grinston turned perfectly green as he listened to this recital of troubles prophesied, in which he was supposed to have not the slightest interest.

Meanwhile Billy Grasper was fidgeting about until he could put in a word.

"I say, Northwood, how did those things sell? Are you sending much back in the *Paklat*?"

"I sold all Those Things down to the last hairpin!" said Johnnie, with an intolerable sneer. "But you shouldn't make your invoices quite so heavy. It's bad enough to ship jew's-harps and cough-drops, without charging for them as if an army in the field really wanted such rubbish. I'll account to you for your old godown sweepings at fifty per cent. off your invoices and you'll make a howling profit out of it then! By the way,

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Grinston, I forgot to tell you that we made two hundred and fifty per cent. on one hundred tons of coffee my father brought from Sulu. Well, good-bye! I must be off to see Finlay."

Grinston and Grasper looked at the disappearing figure of the lad.

"Damn his cool impudence!" growled Billy Grasper.

"I shan't forget it," said Grinston.

"How have those two fools managed to make such a pile in a few weeks? It's something sickening!"

"Luck chiefly. But old Northwood can manage a thing of this kind better than most. Still, he would never have come through it without that young French-speaking devil who has just left us. Did you hear what the cub said about the *Millicent*? He knows somehow that we've got a half share in that venture. I wish we hadn't! That young beast has made me quite nervous about it."

Finlay received Johnnie very frigidly. "Have you been to your godowns yet? No! Why not? Oh, you have just arrived this morning! Do you know you have been away seven weeks and three days? What about those godowns?"

Finlay was "brief but short," as the schoolboy said of his letter, and if Master Johnnie wanted a tonic he certainly had it. He found on arrival at the No. 1 godown that his exploits had been much magnified by the Chinese. Hoon Kiat and Chow Kit were full of the vast profits supposed to have been made during the Tonkin expedition. He also learned that Finlay had been round the godowns every day during his absence, sometimes early in the morning, sometimes late in the evening, and at different times during the day. The whole of the Chinese staff were genuinely glad to see Tuan Northwood back again, for Finlay had been excessively severe and harsh with them. It was easy work getting into the old routine again, with the goodwill of his

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subordinates, and Johnnie Northwood soon had everything running to his complete satisfaction.

Finlay discontinued his rounds on his junior's return, but on one public holiday, when his Collyer Quay office was deserted by all and sundry, the chief took it into his head to see what was going on at No. 1 godown. There he found Mr. Northwood squatting in the middle of a pile of Borneo rubber, busy with a job hardly fit for the commonest coolie. Johnnie was passing each lump of a ten-ton lot through his hands and laying its secrets bare, either with a slash with a long, thin knife, or a probe with a steel pricker. Sometimes the knife would reveal a nice pocket of sand or wet sawdust in the heart of what looked a respectable lump of rubber, or a quart of water would follow the probe of the pricker, from a large piece which exhibited no external symptoms of dropsy. The rubber was soaked in slime and mud and crammed with every form of adulteration.

Rubber is valuable stuff. On this hot day it gave off a frightful stench, which reminded Johnnie of the Cua Cam at low water, while the mud and water from the rubber stained his hands and his clothing abominably. But he went steadily on with his filthy job, amidst the protests and curses of the Chinese seller, who strongly objected to his rubber being thus treated before it was weighed. It was Johnnie's way of spending his holiday.

Suddenly he found Finlay standing over him.

"What are you doing, Northwood?"

"Sorting rubber! This is a particularly bad lot, loaded right up with mud, sand, water, and any kind of filth which will add to the weight. Every piece of it has to be cut open and left to drain until to-morrow, when we shall weigh it in."

"Hum! You're getting a damned fine education for nothing, or rather, I should say, at the expense of Brownlow and Co."

So saying, Finlay left the building as if he were hasten-

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ing to call in the police to arrest Johnnie for robbing him. It was his way of doing things.

The French Consul was delighted to see Johnnie, and congratulated him warmly, not only on the successful result of his operations, but on the very favourable impression he had made at Haiphong. The Vicomte wanted to propose his friend for the decoration of the Dragon d'Annam, consisting of a very pretty star and ribbon, but Johnnie, knowing that he had no chance of getting permission from the Queen to wear it, declined the proffered honour.

CHAPTER XXVIII

CAPTAIN NORTHWOOD'S RETURN

JOHNNIE had a telegram from his father advising him of his safe arrival at Haiphong from the Java coast, and was wondering why he did not get the expected message telling him of the departure of the *Paklat* for Singapore, when he received the following letter :

“ Along Bay.

“ MY DEAR JOHNNIE,

“ We arrived at Haiphong from Taliewong Bay with a cargo of five hundred and ninety-eight really beautiful ponies. It appears that General Dupont and several of the officers are so pleased with them that quite a large number of the best will be selected as mounts for the officers. The invalid officers I took for the cruise have returned vastly the better, and are good enough to say all sorts of kind things of my hospitality, etc.

“ When I saw Vernet about getting some coals for the run to Singapore, he was a bit put out, as it appears that Pierre Corneille are the only people who have any for sale, and their coal is about as cheap as the timber you bought from your lady friend. Vernet hit upon the idea of our being allowed to coal the *Paklat* ex Government stocks, in consideration of services rendered. We then heard that the first direct cargo of Welsh coal sent by the French Government, in accordance with the advice of your friend the French Consul at Singapore, had just arrived at Along Bay in the *Dupuy de Lôme*, which was

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loaded much too deep to cross the Haiphong bar. General Dupont then inquired if I would lighten the French steamer sufficiently to enable her to cross the bar. Being a Government, they have naturally chartered the most unsuitable vessel in their mercantile marine for the purpose required. Vernet proposed a fifteen days' charter at one thousand dollars per day, the Government to find coals. This, of course, is very excellent business, and will make a nice finish to the Tonkin expedition. I was handed a charter-party, with orders to proceed to Along Bay immediately. On my arrival here I at once went on board the *Dupuy de Lôme* to make arrangements about lightening the ship, but the French captain said my charter-party gave him no authority to deliver me any coals. He said that as my charter-party had already commenced it was no affair of mine, but he must have definite instructions from Haiphong before he starts a single ton of coal. He advised me to anchor the *Paklat* astern of the *Dupuy de Lôme* and wait orders, and, of course, there is nothing else to be done. I have written to Vernet how I am placed, and am leaving him to do whatever may be necessary. I should say the *Dupuy de Lôme* must be on very heavy demurrage, because her captain says that he hopes his orders may be delayed for some days yet. So, you see, I shall not be back in Singapore so soon as expected. But the French are welcome to keep the *Paklat* lying at anchor in Along Bay as long as they like for one thousand dollars a day. We are burning no coal and spending hardly any money otherwise, while one thousand dollars a day mounts up handsomely.

"The *Millicent* is lying a few cables' length astern of us flying the yellow flag. She had two or three cases of small-pox on arrival here which the captain did not declare, with the result that he is in trouble all round with the French authorities, and he has added fuel to the flames by being insolent to them and threatening them with

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the displeasure of the Governor of Hong-Kong. He will have a lot of trouble when he gets out of quarantine—and when that may be no one can tell. Meanwhile, the poor ponies are dying off in dozens. We see their bodies being continually thrown overboard. The *Millicent* venture will lose a lot of money, and both Vernet and Hildebrand are very sick about it. It appears they have a half share between them, and Grinston and Co. the other half. Not every steamer nor every captain is suitable for this especial business!

"Meanwhile we are all well and jolly in a quiet way. Really this little slack time is a godsend to the lot of us.

"We all miss you very much and the ship is very dull without you. What did Finlay say about your being away so long? It would be very jolly if you succeeded after all in working up your way in Brownlow and Co.'s as we all originally intended you should do, my dear lad.

"Now this is a great long yarn, which I will cut short without any further ado.

"Your affectionate father,

"JOHN DILLON NORTHWOOD."

This was very cheering news indeed. Later, Johnnie got yet another letter, from Haiphong this time, in which his father wrote that after having waited until the morning of the fifteenth day at Along Bay without any instructions being sent to the captain of the *Dupuy de Lôme*, he went on board a steam-launch to Haiphong, when Vernet and he put in a bill for fifteen days' charter money of the *Paklat*. There was a bit of a fuss made at no orders having been sent on board the *Dupuy de Lôme*, but the money was paid and a fresh charter-party was signed for another fifteen days. This time, however, care was taken that something should be done for the money. The *Paklat* was to start loading coal the very next morning.

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Grinston and Billy Grasper, being men of a distinctly envious turn of mind, got perfectly ill over Captain Northwood's continued run of luck, while they were dropping money heavily over the *Millicent* and drifting into litigation with the owners of that steamer.

Finally Johnnie got a telegram advising him that the *Paklat* had left Haiphong for Singapore, so that the Tonkin expedition was now really ended.

The ship made a clinking passage from Haiphong and anchored in Singapore Harbour a day before she was due. Johnnie got word, however, directly she was signalled, and was on board to meet his father, who was delighted to see him.

As usual, the worthy chief engineer waylaid "Mr. John" for the usual "two-handed crack."

Johnnie commenced by remarking on the remarkably fast passage from Haiphong.

"Aye! Them is fine coals!" replied McCracken enigmatically.

"What coals?"

"Double Screened Best Welsh and nothin' less, I can tell you, sir!"

"Eh? What?"

"That's the kind o' coal on board the big Frenchman frae Cardiff!"

"You don't mean to say that you've steamed from Haiphong on French Government coal?"

"We did that, sir, and what's more it hasn't cost us a cent. I got chummy with the 'chief' of the French ship—a Frenchman, whose mother had somethin' to do with a Scotch engine-driver and improved the creature lots. He actually took to a drop o' 'Torchlight' at once, which shows there's breedin' in the man. We fixed things up between us. And we knocked off our dischargin' at six p.m. on the last day of our charter and there's some three or four hundred ton of fine Welsh coal lyin' about in the lower decks, which will pay for pickin' up. You

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and I are always good friends, Mr. John, and if you would just give your father to understand that a 'chief' who provides his own coals, so to speak, is mighty hard to be found, and deserves some special recognition in the form of a cash bonus !——”

“ I think, McCracken, the best thing we can do is to send the French Government a draft for the value of their coals, and put you into jail for stealing them. That seems to be the honest way out of this business. How does it strike you ? ”

“ It strikes me as so much damned nonsense ! Just you speak to your father, Mr. John, about a special recognition in the shape of a cash bonus and we need say no more about it ! ”

Captain Northwood, on being consulted, said : “ We can hardly give the old robber another gold watch with a suitable inscription. This time I suppose it will have to be a cheque with a suitable inscription ! After all, there are not many 'chiefs' who steal for their owners. It's a nice state of affairs, anyhow. All that we can say is that we are the best of a bad lot, and that we are mere chickens compared with some of them.

After the *Paklat* had been docked, she was put on the berth for the Borneo coast, whereupon the *Ho Kwei* was promptly taken off the line and laid up. The owners of this particular steamer had had about enough of it, and were not going to fight a man reputed to have come back from Tonkin with at least a million dollars in his pocket. The owners of the *Hong Ann*, however, were people with long heads and long purses, and were not to be so easily frightened out of a trade in which they saw money in spite of present losses.

After having paid off the balance of the purchase-money and the whole of Messrs. Grinston and Co.'s bills—including their commissions, which ran into a startling total—Captain Northwood found himself with a balance of thirty thousand dollars at his bankers. No very huge amount

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truly, but quite sufficient to make him independent of his agents and to provide him with a fund for emergencies and any losses which he might encounter in the future.

So Northwood once more went back to the Borneo coast in good fighting trim.

He met with an enthusiastic welcome at Labuan and all the other ports in his route. Success always adds a lustre to a man's personal popularity.

The Borneo trade was recovering steadily, and the *Paklat* ran once more to a fair profit, which slowly increased with each successive voyage. It was some satisfaction to find that Washington Clarke had come out of the lean times very badly indeed. His steamer the *Sultan* had grounded on a reef just as freights were getting better and had to be sent to Singapore for some very expensive repairs. This great man began to find that there are various drawbacks to the career of a ship-owner of limited means, and was thinking of cutting it altogether. To Captain Northwood's amusement, his competitor began to talk very learnedly and largely about the mining interest of Borneo, and even went so far as to hire natives to dig holes in the ground in search of hidden riches.

In the end, however, Washington Clarke showed that he was not such a fool as he looked. He found nothing much in the holes he dug, but by dint of talking and writing about the mines of Borneo, he found people willing to pay considerable sums of money in hard cash for his concessions, and became a wealthy man. About this Captain Northwood did not care a straw, as long as his ex-supercargo refrained from running an opposition steamer on the coast.

Partly acting on his son's advice, and partly yielding to pressure put on him by various friends in Borneo, from the Governor downwards, Captain Northwood now began to think about taking up some tobacco-lands while they could still be bought at very low prices. The Sumatra

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tobacco-plantations were paying dividends of one hundred per cent. per annum without the slightest difficulty. The soil of Borneo is rich enough in places, and why should not one island grow as good tobacco as another?

In the end Captain Northwood bought twenty thousand acres of land on the Segama River, in Dampier Bay, at thirty cents per acre—the largest property he had ever yet owned. Johnnie was delighted with the vastness of this acquisition, and when a Dutch planter offered shortly afterwards to pay first one dollar and then two per acre for this land, he indulged in many golden dreams about the day when the Northwoods would get back to their old home at Woodleigh and keep open house there again. Naturally he discouraged his father's idea of accepting more than six times the money he had paid for his Borneo estate from the Dutchman. Of course, it was worth much more than the Dutch planter offered. Why not plant it with tobacco oneself and make one hundred per cent. per annum on the capital invested? That would soon put things right!

So, instead of accepting an immediate thumping profit on his estate, the Captain set to work spending money on it in the way of surveys, experimental plantations, and other costly items.

Well, it seemed all right, and there were many brilliant examples to lead both the Captain and his son astray, of which perhaps the most conspicuous was that of Bernhard Stahl, sometime bookkeeper of the firm of Rudesheimer and Co., a well-known German concern. Stahl was a very gay and open-handed creature, of whom his afflicted chief used to tell sad and scandalous things. Finally he gave him the sack. Stahl, being practically penniless and not knowing from where he could get assistance, bethought himself of the wealthy Captain Northwood, who was reported to be a man of a generous disposition. So he walked round early one morning to Greenwood, told Northwood of his troubles, and admitting

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that he was of no use for office work, begged the loan of five hundred dollars so that he could go to Sumatra and get a billet as assistant on a tobacco-plantation. It was not much of a sum to stake against the whole future of a man in whom the Captain thought he discerned some good points, so Stahl got his money and went to Sumatra. In the course of a year or two he repaid his debt and wrote from Sumatra that he was prospering. Yet another few years and he was assistant manager on one of the best of the Sumatra estates. His manager died suddenly, whereupon Stahl did the sensible thing and married the by no means inconsolable widow, who happened to possess quite a number of shares in the company owning the plantation, paying their one hundred per cent. dividend without fail. Stahl became manager himself, and at the time when Captain Northwood bought his Borneo estate, happening to meet Johnnie in Singapore, he told him that his *bonus* as manager for that year was no less than twenty thousand pounds! And Stahl was no liar.

CHAPTER XXIX

JOHNNIE NORTHWOOD JOINS THE SERVICE OF THE GOLCONDA COMPANY, LIMITED

AFTER a long absence, George Carlyle arrived in Singapore to relieve John Finlay. Of this, Johnnie felt glad. He liked and admired Finlay, but he always felt that he was an exacting and almost unfeeling master, who expected a perfection of service to which it was practically impossible to attain. Carlyle was a more human and sympathetic chief under whom to work. Moreover, there was that phenomenon of his seventy-five dollars a month salary which was a joke of Finlay's that was now becoming absolutely overgrown.

Carlyle sent for Johnnie very shortly after taking command of the office, and greeting him with much cordiality, asked him what account he had to give of himself.

"A very good one," replied Johnnie confidently. "I think I can show excellent results for my work."

"So Finlay says," rejoined Carlyle.

This was very satisfactory, but as the conversation proceeded Carlyle made remarks about the necessity of a much more rigid economy in working the godowns, and of a more conciliating attitude towards Chinese dealers. This was not at all to young Northwood's taste. He very plainly told his chief that good pay is the only means of getting permanent good service, and put it very forcibly that he himself, while managing a very important and difficult branch of the business, was drawing the pay of a second-rate Eurasian copying-clerk. He inquired anxiously

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when this matter would be put right. Carlyle said that he would consider at the end of the year and, after impressing on his junior the necessity for redoubled exertion and a large reduction in working expenses, dismissed him from his presence.

During the next six months Johnnie experienced much trouble owing to his chief's passion for cutting down expenses. Nor did Carlyle support his authority as Finlay had done consistently. But he had now ruled the up-river godowns for three years, and his resourcefulness and force of character were such that he "made good" against all obstacles.

At last New Year's Day dawned. This day is a high holiday in Singapore, when land and sea sports attract Europeans and natives alike to the esplanade and the beautiful harbour, to enjoy the fun which runs riot on this occasion.

But it was no holiday for Johnnie. He went to his No. 1 godown, thinking it a good opportunity to try a new method of cleaning gum copal. He had fixed a large cylinder to one of the gambier presses and expected by filling it with gum copal coated with earth and all sorts of impurities, and rotating it rapidly, to get rid of most of the dirt adhering to the gum in a less extravagant way than by hiring a gang of Chinese coolies to chip it off with little hatchets—a most wasteful and expensive proceeding.

Just as he was about to start his simple machinery, Hoon Kiat and Chow Kit begged of him to go upstairs to the first floor to look at a newly-arrived lot of rattans, which appeared to be rather doubtful as to quality. Johnnie left his experiment and went upstairs with the Chinamen. Barely had they got upstairs when they were horrified to hear a dull sort of crashing sound mingled with cries and shrieks. A dense cloud of dust obscured the air. The other side of the great building had fallen in, burying some men in the ruins.

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Johnnie ran rapidly through the blinding dust until he came to a sort of gaping chaos of splintered timbers, piles of shattered cases and bursting sacks, lying beneath masses of bricks and mortar. In a minute he was down in the heap of ruins, pushing a piece of fallen masonry one way and tugging sacks another in his efforts to reach a Chinaman almost completely buried in the débris. He soon was helped by the willing hands of some coolies, who came to his assistance. The first man was extricated, badly but not mortally injured. Other men were got out in a worse plight, and two dead bodies were carried away.

At one time the coolies stopped work, because at one point where the roof had fallen in the wall was seen to be very shaky. The upper part of a huge pillar somehow still adhered to this wall while the lower part had fallen away.

How this overhanging mass of masonry supported itself up in the air none could say, but evidently it constituted a very serious danger. There were still men to be got out, and it was necessary to get the wreckage cleared away as soon as possible. As the coolies still hung back, Johnnie scrambled across the ruins and seated himself immediately below the overhanging mass of masonry, so that if it fell or the wall gave way, he would be instantly crushed to death. Once the coolies saw their *man* risking himself this way, they went to work again under his orders.

In after life, Johnnie described this time of danger as being exceptionally trying. As long as the coolies were merely clearing away sacks and cases it did not matter, but when they moved heavy masses of fallen masonry over an uneven surface, the shaky wall, with its strange burden high up in the air, quivered ominously. However, when all the men had been accounted for, Johnnie was able to leave his dangerous post. Inspector Quinton now put in an appearance and practically took charge of

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the building, and some Chinese carpenters were set to work to shore up the dangerous walls.

Johnnie, wet with sweat and caked with dirt, thought it about time to hunt up his chief and tell him of the disaster. He found George Carlyle sitting solitary and deserted in the big Collyer Quay offices, hard at work as usual, while everyone else was holiday-making. He started at Johnnie's dishevelled appearance and his haggard face, but he took the news very coolly and went across with him to the scene of the disaster. It was soon made evident, after a little inquiry, that the building had not been overweighted in any way, and that the collapse of part of the upper floor was due to the scamping of their work by native contractors.

The gambier press, at which Johnnie intended to make his experiment, was found buried and completely smashed under piles of masonry. Had not Hoon Kiat called Johnnie away just one moment before the disaster he and those with him must necessarily have been crushed to death.

Next morning commenced an exceptionally busy day, by the evening of which Johnnie Northwood had made up his mind to serve Brownlow and Co. no longer. But just as, thoroughly tired out, he was thinking of leaving his godown, old Kauh, the cashier, came in, and depositing eighty dollars on his desk, asked for the usual receipt for a month's salary paid in advance. Forgetting his own private interests in the stress of the moment, Northwood said: "Surely you have given me five dollars too much this time!"

"No," quietly replied the Chinaman. "Your wages have been increased!"

So *this* was George Carlyle's response to his appeal. This, then, was the reward of his three years' work! Finlay rated him at seventy-five dollars and George Carlyle at exactly five dollars more. Had he really made and saved Brownlow and Co. some thousands of pounds

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every year or was he the victim of some delusion about his own work? Anyhow, he would soon find out his value in the market by seeking employment elsewhere.

So Johnnie went home to his father, who had just arrived from Borneo, to roar out his grievance in the paternal ear. He was going back to Tonkin, he was going to the devil, but he was going to give Brownlow and Co. the sack before going anywhere else. Finally his wrath began to take a definite shape. That very evening he was going to write out his resignation and have it sent to George Carlyle the next morning, enclosing a five-dollar banknote, the amount of his increase in salary, which, being beneath contempt, should be returned without delay to its donor.

Captain Northwood simply assured his son that on cool reflection he would do nothing so unmannerly and so insulting to such a fine man as George Carlyle. He reminded Johnnie of certain old friendships, and of the fact that it was Carlyle who had saved the Ayer Manis Estate for them. He soothed his hot-headed son with the assurance that if he wanted to get another billet he would not have much trouble in securing it.

"I didn't want to tell you before, because you are simply blown out with vanity, conceit, and the devil generally. However, Singapore merchants keep a pretty keen look-out on their competitors, and I don't mind telling you, as you evidently don't know it, that if Brownlow's cannot appreciate your value, others do, and have told me so. So keep cool, and keep friends with George Carlyle; and, above all, let us go to dinner. I am as hungry as a hunter!"

Next morning Captain Northwood was rejoiced to see that his son was in a calm frame of mind, albeit his jaw was set somewhat more firmly than usual.

George Carlyle happened to be in an unusually nervous and irritable condition that morning. He was not feeling well, and it was one of those days when everything goes

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wrong. The mere sight of young Northwood reminded him of the heavy loss caused to his firm by the collapse of the No. 1 godown, and he received his junior with an ill grace.

"Well, what is it?" he asked.

"I've come to talk to you about my salary."

"Salary? Why, it's just been raised!"

"Yes, by five dollars. That's not enough."

"It will have to be enough. We can't afford any more!"

"Last year we made over a million dollars profit. You can surely give me more than eighty dollars."

"Well, *you are not worth more*, and that's the end of the matter!"

"Ah! I'm not worth more than eighty dollars. That is a question which you alone can decide while I remain in your service. I think I am worth a great deal more and I shall go elsewhere to seek better employment."

"All right," said his chief. "Do as you please and go where you like as long as you don't bother me about it."

Johnnie left Brownlow's office much mortified and humiliated. Of course, he could not remain any longer in their service after such a terrific smack in the eye. It seemed a singular reward for three years of faithful and strenuous service. Could it be possible that Carlyle was right and that he was wrong?

Almost mechanically he determined to call on Mr. Robert Bruce, the manager of the Golconda Company, Limited, to tell him that as he was about to leave Brownlow's, it would be advisable to settle up a certain produce account between the two concerns without any delay.

Johnnie was an expert in gum copal. He had collected it in New Guinea and the Celebes, and had treated it in Singapore for shipment to London and New York. Few could tell so well as he could how much clean gum could be got out of a pile of rough earthy stuff which looked

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almost valueless. He took a delight in grading the gum according to its different shades and qualities, and understood the art of packing it to a nicety. Moreover, for some time past he had persuaded Brownlow and Co., Armstrong, Ogilvie and Co., and the Golconda Company, to allow him to be the sole buyer of gum copal for these three great houses, so as to minimize the competition in purchasing the gum in its rough state, which cut down profits most undesirably.

He had a great admiration for Mr. Bruce, a distinguished-looking man, who had the appearance of a colonel in mufti, and the reputation of being perfectly honourable and very kind-hearted in spite of a somewhat touchy temper.

Mr. Bruce greeted him very cordially: "Glad to see you, Northwood. I am just going to have my tiffin. Will you join me?"

Seated comfortably in Mr. Bruce's private tiffin-room, before a capital cold lunch and a sound bottle of claret, the two men commenced a conversation which was to change completely the course of our hero's career. Mr. Bruce was greatly astonished to hear of the very strained relations which had been so suddenly set up between his visitor and George Carlyle. Then an idea suddenly struck him.

"If you are not happy with Brownlow's," he said, "why not join us? We are rather short-handed, and I want a trained man, who knows the country and can speak the language; not a raw griffin from home. I have known and respected your father for many a year, and I know you can work harder than most young men. I like the way you managed that gum copal account. I have been watching you very narrowly to see if you would not yield to the temptation of favouring your own firm, but I must say I found you absolutely just and fair in the distribution of your purchases. I believe you to be honest in all things, as in this one. What do you say to serving me instead of George Carlyle?"

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Johnnie was astonished and delighted. The Golconda Company was the most aristocratic and best paid service in Singapore, but it was notoriously most difficult to get an appointment on the staff. All vacancies were filled up from the head office in London, where there was a tremendous competition to get the sons of wealthy and influential men even as written down on the waiting list for future consideration. Suddenly the entrance to the company's service was thrown wide open to him in this unexpected manner.

Naturally he accepted Mr. Bruce's offer. The question of salary was soon settled. Mr. Bruce asked him what he wanted. Northwood suggested doubling his present pay to start with—a proposal instantly agreed to, with an offer of a contract for three years, under which his pay should be liberally increased each year.

When tiffin was over Mr. Bruce said: "Come to my desk and write me a letter offering your services, and I will give you another one accepting them, and the thing's done!"

This formality was soon accomplished, and Johnnie Northwood found himself thus unexpectedly transferred to the Golconda Company's service. So Carlyle was wrong after all!

Captain Northwood was surprised to find that his son had doubled his market value in twenty-four hours and won his way into the G. C. L. service. He did not quite like it. He thought Johnnie had been too hasty in taking Carlyle at his word, and should have tried him again on some other and more suitable occasion before irrevocably breaking with him.

"Whatever Carlyle may have said to you, I know he will not like you throwing him overboard in this way. He has told me himself that you were one of his most valuable men, and that he would make things right for you some day. There will be no end of a row when you tell him what you have done. Promise me you will do

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your best to leave him on friendly terms. George Carlyle is a very fine man, and I don't want you to offend him."

Johnnie promised, though he could not see that he had done wrong, in view of the extraordinary policy adopted towards him by both Finlay and Carlyle.

Next day he sent in his resignation and was promptly sent for by George Carlyle, who demanded of him in angry tones what he meant by "this foolery."

Johnnie explained an unexpected development of circumstances, for which he had not sought, and urged that he had taken his chief at his word when he was told he was not worth more than eighty dollars a month.

"Nonsense!" roared Carlyle, more angrily than before. "Just write to Bruce and say it's all a mistake. I suppose we can pay you just as much as the Golconda Company. We'll give you the same as they offer and be done with this rot. Go back to your work, sir!"

Upon it being made clear to Carlyle that Johnnie was really leaving him, he reproached him with black ingratitude. The angry senior cast it in his teeth that Brownlow and Co. had picked him out of the gutter at a time when no one else would touch him with a pitchfork. As for the Golconda Company, they were people who made a lot of money out of mines and forests with which Northwood would have nothing whatever to do. Their general business, such as produce, coaling and shipping, was fast falling to pieces. Carlyle predicted that young Northwood would loaf about like the rest of the G. C. L. men until they got tired of him and turned him out into the streets again. But Johnnie did not care to listen to more of such conversation than was absolutely necessary, and took his leave at the first opportunity.

He had every right to leave Brownlow's service at the end of the month, but he found it was by no means an easy matter to give over the charge of their produce godowns at short notice without causing much incon-

Johnnie Northwood joins the Golconda Company

venience and loss to his old friends. Carlyle was evidently in no hurry that he should go, and in the end it was no less than six months after he had sent in his resignation that Northwood was enabled to give it effect and actually quit the service of Brownlow and Co.

By delaying his departure from Brownlow's up-river godowns, young Northwood did a grave injury to his own interests. Mr. Bruce, whose health was failing, was anxious to get him to work in his proper sphere. Of course, he appreciated Johnnie's motives in studying Brownlow's interests up to the last moment, but it was a nuisance, nevertheless. Johnnie's request for a short leave of absence before entering on his new duties was refused, and he was told that he must take charge of the company's shipping and coaling interests at once.

He was surprised to find into what a welter of confusion and disorder the Golconda Company's shipping department had fallen. It had been an important and flourishing branch of their business; but owing to the death of an experienced old clerk, who had not been replaced, and various other causes, it had rapidly been going from bad to worse, until it threatened to collapse altogether under the weight of its own inefficiency.

Johnnie saw with horror that he was in for another big reorganizing job, but, as usual, he went to work with a will and grappled with his problem energetically.

Since Mr. Bruce had been ailing the shipping department was practically in charge of Mr. Peter O'Brien, a perfectly delightful young gentleman, who spoke French with much charm, as, indeed, might have been expected, his mother being a Frenchwoman—some ill-natured people insisted that the lady was a French milliner before she married Captain O'Brien of the 140th Foot. Be that as it may, Captain O'Brien and his wife, who now lived in Paris, had sufficient influence to get their son into the Golconda Company's service. The company required a good French scholar at Singapore, because

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they had so much to do with foreign men-of-war and troopships. This, then, was Peter O'Brien's great qualification, and apparently the only one, except perhaps his immense popularity with a certain number of foreign officers. From a business point of view, he seemed to be a positive nuisance—he delayed rather than facilitated the passage of a troopship through Singapore. More than one pilot had been driven to the verge of lunacy, because if Peter had not smuggled away some of the ship's officers to the Hôtel d'Europe when she was due to leave, it would very likely happen that he had disappeared with some of the most important passengers—the colonel and his daughters, for instance—into unknown regions.

On one occasion Peter managed to organize an impromptu picnic-party, composed of the principal passengers of two different troopships. He borrowed the pilot's launch without mentioning the fact to the pilot himself, and having provisioned the craft impartially from the pantries of each steamer, took his delighted guests for a lovely cruise through the pretty islands which gem the waters of Singapore. The moonlit effects being especially beautiful, the merry party did not return to Tanjong Pagar and their respective ships until midnight. Meanwhile, that section of the wharf had been given over to steam whistles and profanity for many a long and dreadful hour. That a couple of crowded transports had been kept waiting for twenty-four hours because Peter wanted to go for a picnic, was a matter of no particular surprise to anybody; and all that Peter had to say on the subject was to the effect that he had enjoyed himself thoroughly.

Johnnie Northwood and Peter did not hit it off at all well. From the moment that Northwood took charge, O'Brien began to pay less and less attention to his work, until it became to be quite a matter of speculation whether he would come to the office on any given day or not. The

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fact could no longer be disguised that the young fellow was plunging deeper into dissipation every day and living much above his income.

Johnnie Northwood had no one to whom he could turn for assistance in dealing with a difficulty which was new to him. Mr. Bruce was now quite ill, and his colleagues viewed him with either indifference or dislike. He had not entered the G. C. L. in the usual way from the head office, and one or two of them decided to put him on the "white coolie" basis; a useful kind of man to knock about the wharves and ships and that sort of thing, but a fellow to be kept in his place, and not by any means to be treated as an equal. This also was a new experience.

While his colleagues took it very easily indeed, young Northwood found himself again being overworked and sorely tried. He could *not* do as Peter O'Brien did so often, enjoy himself while a ship was lying idle at the wharf. Nor could he find it in his heart to send the steamers of the China Shippers Line to fill up at Penang and Colombo while there was plenty of cargo to be had at Singapore. Many a time did he go to the wharf at about midnight and see that a transport or some big ship in a hurry was coaled until she was full up. Then he would go out to sea with the ship as far as the Sultan Shoal perhaps, while he made up her accounts, and then return in the pilot's steam launch, with the vessel's accounts closed and the captain's draft in his pocket. After which he had his bath and breakfast preparatory to tucking into a real hard day's work.

People laughed at first at the spectacle of a G. C. L. man going round the freight market, but it was soon felt that young Northwood was a very different man to Peter O'Brien, and Brownlow's, amongst others, were made to feel the blows dealt to them by their new competitor.

In addition to working early and late Johnnie found

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that he could rarely take a Sunday off, so that the strain on him was exceedingly severe.

Meanwhile, the conduct of Peter O'Brien was becoming intolerable; the unfortunate lad was drinking heavily, and spent a lot of his time in certain places known only to an unselect few. One of his latest dodges was to shift his address perpetually, so that his perplexed senior never knew where the man really lived. However, the last address which he selected was respectable enough. It appeared, to Johnnie's vast surprise, that Peter was actually living with the Reverend Mr. Ebenezer Macphail at Mount Lebanon. O'Brien tried to humbug him into believing that he was on the road to reformation, but his acts did not square with his words.

At last when Peter had managed to detain a Russian transport, while Northwood was busy over other steamers, simply because he went off with some of the officers on a regular debauch, matters came to a crisis. Johnnie drove to Mr. Bruce's private residence and placed the situation before him. Mr. Bruce, now very ill, took his usual view that no one should serve the G. C. L. unless he could conduct himself like a gentleman. Peter O'Brien must, therefore, be dismissed at once. Bruce, however, decided that out of respect for Captain O'Brien, the unfortunate young man must not be dealt with harshly. Johnnie was instructed to pay his expenses to Paris and to furnish him with fifty pounds, so that he need not reach his home empty-handed.

These appeared to be exceedingly generous conditions; but O'Brien, who had a special impudence of his own, would have none of them. He told Northwood that he was being shamefully treated by the G. C. L., that he was not going home to Paris, nor would he touch their fifty pounds! Peter seemed to be in no kind of hurry to meet that military gentleman his father, who was reported to have a warlike temper of his own.

O'Brien never showed his face in the G. C. L. offices

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after he had been informed of Mr. Bruce's decision. But his creditors frequented the buildings in unexpected numbers, and with a persistency worthy of a greater cause.

A very polite person from John Small and Co. appeared with a sheaf of Mr. O'Brien's unpaid bills amounting to two thousand nine hundred and eighty-nine dollars eighty-five cents, and urged upon Johnnie that it was the sacred duty of the Golconda Company to pay John Small and Co., who trusted implicitly in the honour of a G. C. L. man. The polite person had also something to say about the "necessaries of life" being supplied by his firm. A very casual look at the bills revealed the fact that Peter's idea of things necessary consisted chiefly of champagne and whisky, varied with pale ale and cognac. Anchovy sauce, herrings in tins, *olives farcies* and cigars were in much request by Peter and his friends, who used extraordinary quantities of these and other delicacies. Some of the items charged—such as a pair of gold bangles, and various articles of millinery supplied—threw some light on another side of Peter's private life. It is wonderful what a lot of character reading a man can get out of the perusal of another man's bills!

Johnnie told the polite person that John Small and Co. had been pandering to the worst tastes of a profligate young man, and that they richly deserved to lose their money. The result would have been just the same if O'Brien had run up bills for ginger-beer and hymn-books. The Golconda Company was not going to pay.

The polite person expressed his regret that he would now have to institute the necessary legal proceedings against Mr. O'Brien and took his departure, to be succeeded by some almost naked chitties, who held Peter O'Brien's promissory notes for large amounts and shrieked volubly that they *must* be paid. They managed to sneak Johnnie's pens, pencils and india-rubber while they were being pushed out by the office tambies, audibly announcing that they were going to take a "shummons" for swindling

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against Tuan O'Brien and have him locked up at once.

Every shop and hotel keeper in Singapore called on Johnnie Northwood with a kaleidoscopic collection of bills and "chits," only to be shown the door. Mr. Harry Abrams had a long livery-stable account, which was quite interesting in its way, but it had to be left unpaid. Mr. Giuseppe Tambourini, of the firm of Fratelli Tambourini, the well-known Italian ship-chandlers, presented himself with a courtly bow and a bill which looked like some sort of a petition to Parliament, but it was never so much as unrolled, and the urbane Genoese backed himself out of the office in a silent yellow rage until he reached the staircase, when he put on his hat, and solemnly said: "Dam his eye!"

All this was bad enough, but there was worse to follow. A day or two afterwards the Rev. Ebenezer Macphail had a tale to unfold to Johnnie Northwood's ear, which made that young man fairly sit up. It appeared from Mrs. Macphail's own confession—she was a bonnie Eurasian, by the way—that the graceless Peter O'Brien had profited in more ways than one by his sojourn amidst the shades of Mount Lebanon, which he had left without settling his bill for board and lodging. The reverend and unfortunate gentleman produced a melancholy scrap of paper, in which it was stated that thirty days' board and lodging at one dollar fifty cents per diem equalled forty-five dollars, while various items such as washing, etc., brought up the grand total to fifty-eight dollars ninety-two cents. Evidently Peter had provided his own whisky. Johnnie paid this bill out of his own pocket, and in this remarkable way the Rev. Mr. Macphail achieved the distinction of being the only one of O'Brien's creditors who received payment of any kind.

While all this trouble was brewing in Singapore Peter, who hated anything of the kind, had quietly crossed the strait to Johor, where he had a royal time of it at Balmoral, an estate of which the Golconda Company were the agents.

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The manager of the estate, knowing nothing of Peter's dismissal, made much of him and enjoyed the society of his light-hearted guest amazingly. The life at Balmoral, however, palled on the volatile Peter after a fortnight, and having borrowed a hundred dollars from the good old planter, he returned to Singapore, where he hid himself until he had matured his plans.

His final exit from Singapore society was worthy of him. He walked into Mr. Harry Abrams's yard at a moment when the proprietor of the establishment was not there, and noticing a very handsome turn-out in charge of a syce, simply took possession of it, and was soon driving one of the finest horses in Singapore round the Esplanade, belonging to a wealthy Deli planter, who took a great pride in his new acquisition. From the Esplanade Peter drove to Victoria Street, where he called on a lady friend of easy manners, who was quite pleased to go for a nice drive with him.

They called at two different hotels where Peter's "chit" still ran, in order to refresh themselves with some champagne. It is supposed that Peter and his lady friend were on their way to Johnston's Pier when the accident occurred. The Deli planter's horse was certainly heading in that direction, when Peter somehow managed to take in a lamp-post betwixt his off wheel and the body of the new gig. There was a smashing sound as the lady of easy manners went overboard. She fell on the ground, while Peter fell on top of her. The Deli planter's horse was off at a wild gallop with a pair of broken shafts hanging to him.

Peter picked himself up, dusted himself with his pocket-handkerchief, and hailing a passing gharry, jumped into it and drove to Collyer Quay. A few minutes later he was on board a Dutch steamer bound to Deli, to which his baggage had already been transferred. Like many others, he was going to try his luck in Sumatra, and what became of the lady or of the Dutch planter's new turnout did not bother him in the slightest degree.

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Any resident of Singapore has met more than one Peter O'Brien in his day. It is astonishing how rapidly a bright young fellow will go to pieces amid the demoralizing facilities of life in the Far East, if he has no strength of character.

To Johnnie Northwood's infinite regret, Mr. Robert Bruce was invalided home about this time, an event which deprived him of his only friend in the service, and the Golconda Company of an able, upright and successful manager, whose honourable and generous character was recognized by the whole colony. Mr. Bruce was succeeded by Mr. Richard Piggott, promoted to the Singapore command from another of the company's branches. Mr. Piggott, affectionately known as "Dick" by the racing community of the Straits Settlements, was a strange contradiction in terms. A good-looking, well-built, little man, his clear-cut features and extreme neatness, combined with a certain severity of manner, which gave a touch of dignity to his whole deportment, invariably produced a favourable impression at the outset. His extreme taciturnity won for him a reputation for much more wisdom than he possessed. He passed for a man of few words, who thought much and said little.

A bold and skilful rider, Piggott was absolutely dominated by a passion for horses and racing. There seemed to be precious little about horseflesh and races which he did not know, and he soon became the leading spirit of the Singapore Sporting Club. To Johnnie, who though extremely fond of horses, never went near a race meeting, this sort of thing in the manager of the Golconda Company seemed to be all nonsense.

Piggott's rule of the G. C. L. office was followed by disaster to our hero. Although Johnnie was working early and late, and hardly by any chance got a Sunday off, Piggott steadily refused him the assistance for which he begged continually, and at last the inevitable happened. Young Northwood's powerful constitution broke down

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under the strain to which he was subjected, and he was sent to the hospital suffering from fever and exhaustion. Indeed, he was so reduced that his life hung in the balance for a certain time.

When Johnnie got out of hospital he was so weak that he had to support himself with a stick in each hand. He had obtained leave to go up the China Sea in a P. and O. boat on furlough, to recruit his health, but when he saw what a mess was being made of things, he hobbled across the office to consult with his chief about the situation.

"Well, you look pretty badly shucked!" said Piggott graciously, as he returned to his copy of the *Sporting Times*, and thereby cut off any further conversation between himself and his junior.

Johnnie was greatly minded to take his sorely-needed trip up the China Sea, but he thought better of it after a consideration, and went with his mother to Ayer Manis instead, where in a couple of weeks he picked up enough strength to be able to go back to his work.

But he was not to work single-handed any longer. The head office sent out Mr. Harry Scrope to the Singapore shipping department. Scrope developed an entirely new disease. While taking a certain interest in racing, since racing was the correct form at that time, he saved every dollar he could for investments in stocks and shares of all kinds. He was so sensitive to the fluctuations of the market that he would have made an admirable barometer for a stockbroker.

Johnnie found Scrope useful in many ways, however, and turned over a great deal of desk-work and accounts to him. Scrope used to complain that he was being abominably overworked, and it really seemed as if the shipping department would have to be further reinforced.

In the meantime, Northwood, having now completed five years' service, was anxious to go home on furlough; but Mr. Piggott put a stop to anything of the kind. "Dick" wanted to go to England himself, and he decreed

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that his junior should remain in Singapore until his return from his holiday.

To Johnnie's great relief, his chief took his departure by the French mail-boat and was replaced by Mr. Willie Fairfax from Golconda. Just as Piggott was hard, so was Fairfax kindly and generous. Fairfax was of too indolent a disposition to make a first-class business man, but he had sufficient intelligence to encourage his staff to discharge their duties efficiently and to make their branch pay. No longer checked and curbed at every moment, Northwood at last had liberty to work on larger lines. Mr. William Douglas being at this time discharged from the service of Grinston and Co., because Grinston did not like him, Northwood begged to be allowed to offer the unlucky young man a billet on his staff. Fairfax demurred a good deal, but he rather liked Douglas himself, and when it was considered that he must be all right if he could not get on with Grinston and Co., he got an acting post in the shipping department, which was subsequently confirmed.

William Douglas turned out to be a very valuable acquisition to the shipping department, and Northwood at last had time to go thoroughly into certain proposals put before him by Mr. Giuseppe Tambourini, who was opening up in a weak and ill-considered way a trade with Annam, which seemed to be of considerable value. Tambourini was a very clever man in his way, and, further, he was gifted with the most even temper in the world. No one ever saw the worthy Italian startled for a second out of his wonderful equanimity. On occasions Johnnie Northwood conceived it to be his painful duty to tell him that he was a robber and a scoundrel of the deepest dye, only to be met with a placid air of Christian forbearance which was positively heart-breaking.

Giuseppe Tambourini was a man of good ideas, but he was very often faulty in his execution of them. Thus he had put a couple of small steamers called the *Genova* and

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the *Padova* on his trade with the Annam coast. The steamers had been bought exceedingly cheap and were quite suited for the trade, but Giuseppe did not know how to run them and wanted more capital.

Johnnie felt strongly attracted towards this business. It was in complete contrast to Shelby's glowing schemes for the commercial conquest of the enchanted Spice Islands. The new programme was for a trade in such prosaic things as salt and pigs, with a rough and barren country, not more than four days' steam from Singapore.

As Captain Northwood also thought well of the scheme, Johnnie determined to put it before Mr. Fairfax without further loss of time.

CHAPTER XXX

THE DEATH OF CAPTAIN NORTHWOOD

CAPTAIN NORTHWOOD was facing the verandah of Greenwood shortly after daylight one morning, in company with his son, discussing various plans before his departure for Borneo. Suddenly, to Johnnie's consternation, he reeled and would have fallen to the floor, but for his son's assistance. When he was seated in a chair it was noticed that he looked very ill indeed.

Mrs. Northwood, greatly alarmed, sent for the nearest doctor immediately. The Captain had up to that moment been in the most robust health and excellent spirits. His sudden collapse was inexplicable. Dr. Black, however, soon solved the mystery after a brief examination of the patient. He said to him abruptly: "You must not go to sea any more!"

"Not go to sea!" cried the Captain. "Why not? As a matter of fact, I am going to sea this afternoon, and I should like to know who is going to stop me!"

"Well, if you must have it," said Dr. Black bluntly, "you've got heart-disease, and may drop down dead at any moment!"

It was a cruel way of putting it, but Captain Northwood received his sentence of death with his usual courage and seemed to be hardly affected by it. Another doctor was instantly called in, who could but confirm Black's view of the case. However, neither the appeals of his grief-stricken wife nor the calmer remonstrances of his son had the slightest influence on his determina-

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tion to sail for one more voyage to Borneo, and he left in the *Paklat* accordingly, exactly at the hour appointed.

Johnnie went off to the steamer to wish his father good-bye and remained with him to the last possible minute. "I know it's my last voyage," the old sailor said to his son, "but I must have one more cruise to Borneo. I shall come back all right. Good-bye! Try to comfort your mother."

Captain Northwood returned to Singapore, apparently not much the worse for his voyage, but he himself recognized that his race was run, for he immediately handed over the command of the *Paklat* to his chief officer, and after a visit to his agents, retired to Greenwood, to quit his home only at very rare intervals.

As the fatal disease made its progress, he got but little sleep, and was able to take hardly any nourishment. In the final stages a difficulty of breathing prevented him from resting comfortably in his bed, and his mind wandered at times. During many a night his son paced the verandah with his father gripping his shoulder hard to support himself. The dying man had still sufficient strength left to cause his son great pain with his terrible grasp. The two men would step to and fro through the darkest hours of the night, while Mrs. Northwood watched them with a breaking heart. Oft the old sailor would discern headlands, or other familiar landmarks, in the empty blackness of the night, and sometimes, but much more rarely, the verandah became a deck covered with slaughtered pirates and dead sailors.

Strange to say, Johnnie had the faculty of explaining away these horrid visions. He would say in a quiet voice: "You know quite well, father, that this is the verandah of Greenwood, and that it is only your illness which makes you think you see things which happened long ago."

Invariably the reply was: "Yes, Johnnie, that's all right. I know it's not real. I'm only dreaming!" Then he would rub his eyes and resume his interminable quarter-

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deck walk up and down the verandah, listening to the thousand and one things in which his son tried to interest him.

At last he became insensible, and lay on his bed unconscious of everything. This last stage lasted ten days, during which his giant frame wasted rapidly. Practically he died of starvation, because it became evident that the efforts of his medical attendants to nourish him distressed him. In any case, he was beyond the reach of human aid, and on one bright sunny Singapore afternoon he died peacefully in his sleep, with his wife holding one of his hands and his son the other.

Never did the face of a dead man express more calm and content, or more quiet dignity than that of Captain John Dillon Northwood. Such was the end of a man whose whole life had been one of endless perils, adventures and vicissitudes. He died in the sixty-fourth year of his age.

The funeral of Captain Northwood was attended by an unusual number of men of all ranks desirous of testifying their respect for the dead sailor. A singularly brave, honest and generous man, he had lived every hour of his life, and was probably one of the very last of his type.

As soon as it was possible to do so, his widow and son erected a massive monument over his grave, on which the principal inscription reads :

*"In Memory of Captain John Dillon Northwood,
A Pioneer of British Commerce in Borneo."*

Captain Northwood's death was most regrettable and inopportune. Had he been granted but a few more years of life he would probably have carried his fortunes back to their highest level.

The estate itself was of considerable value, but it was left in a highly complicated state, and it was problematical indeed to say what it was really worth. There were the Woodleigh and Ayer Manis estates to begin with. The

The Death of Captain Northwood

Paklat was clear of debt, and there was a fair amount in ready cash at his bankers and agents.

The great Borneo tobacco-estate on which the dead man had spent so much money and which was to make his fortune, was now in the hands of a syndicate, in which he had retained a controlling interest. In the meantime, the syndicate wanted more money, and it was evident that for the time being the Borneo estate would be a drain on Mrs. Northwood's income, instead of bringing her in any money. However, the flotation of a London company was in sight, when the members of the syndicate would get their own back again plus a huge profit. As for the debts owing to the Northwood estate in Borneo, they were many and varied. They represented a large amount on paper, but how much in actual cash?

Poor Johnnie was in an exceedingly difficult position. He was up to his eyes in work, in the business for which he was paid to devote his sole and entire attention, according to the terms of his agreement. What was he to do in the matter of the estate left by his father? His natural inclination was to stick to his post in the Golconda Company, and leave the administration of the Northwood estate to the executor.

Johnnie realized amongst his other troubles that he need no longer sign himself "John Dillon Northwood, Junior," as he had done for so many years. He was now the only Dillon Northwood in existence, and he felt bitterly that he had lost in his father his only friend and adviser. To protect his mother's interests and yet to serve his company faithfully was a thing simply impossible of execution.

There was at least some considerable satisfaction to him in the thought that his mother would have all the money required to keep up her modest establishment at Greenwood for some time to come at least, and that she need not be worried with money matters in the day of her extreme sorrow.

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It was now arranged that Johnnie should go to Borneo by the next trip of the *Paklat* to see what could be done in the way of getting in money due to the Northwood property. Leave of absence was easily procured from Mr. Fairfax for this purpose.

Before leaving for Borneo, however, Johnnie left instructions for negotiations to be opened up with the great Liverpool firm from whom his father had bought the *Alastor*, to take over the *Paklat*, together with the Northwood goodwill, contracts, etc., at a price. It was well known that Holt's desired to extend their operations to Borneo and merely refrained from doing so out of a feeling of friendship for Captain Northwood, with whom they did not desire to enter into competition. It seemed, therefore, to be a natural thing for Northwood to offer his father's trade to Holt's on reasonable terms.

How the Borneo trade was handed over to the Germans by a whole-souled patriot must be related in a subsequent chapter.



A STREET IN LABUAN.

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ALPHABET

CHAPTER XXXI

OF THE MURUT REBELLION, A CERTAIN TOBACCO-PLANTATION AND OTHER MATTERS

WHEN Northwood arrived on board the *Paklat* at Labuan he found things in a state of absolute anarchy.

Mr. William Hood had resigned his Governorship of British North Borneo, and was now on the high road to a distinguished career as Resident of one of the most important native states in the Malay Peninsula.

Since Mr. Hood had left Sandakan, the reins of power had fallen into the hands of such people as McWhirter, Gritz, Ruggles, and their subordinates. Even the veriest savages of Borneo have some ideas on government, and in some mysterious way they got wearied of McWhirter and his associates, and in their simple, emphatic way broke out into open rebellion against them.

Although Labuan at that time was a Crown Colony, the Chartered Company managed to make the island the base of their operations against the Muruts on the mainland.

When the *Paklat* arrived at Labuan, Northwood found the place simply swarming with the Chartered Company's hireling troops, a miscellaneous gathering of Asiatic ruffians of all kinds, officered by a few Europeans, most of whom were untrained to warfare of any kind and who, with good reason, devoutly wished themselves elsewhere. Sikhs, Klings, Dyaks and natives of many a tribe lounged about Labuan with Snider rifles slung across their backs openly seeking whom they might destroy.

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The Governor of the British Colony of Labuan at this juncture was Lieutenant Hamilton, formerly of the British Navy.

Poor Hamilton, a typical British officer and gentleman, was still the naval martinet in all that related to efficiency, cleanliness and order. Under his beneficent and vigorous sway Labuan had progressed visibly and assumed a neat and orderly appearance which did him infinite credit.

Government House was transformed under his sailor-like rule. Never had its beautiful grounds exhibited such lovely lawns and such well-trimmed parterres as during the reign of His Excellency Lieutenant Hamilton, R.N.

This then was the earthly paradise invaded by the motley crowd of the Chartered Company under the command of Colonel Beeswing, formerly of our Indian Army. There was nothing wrong with the colonel, a man with the temper of a lamb and the courage of a lion, but the disreputable crew which he was intended to lead to an inglorious victory over the wretched Muruts defied description.

No sooner had the *Paklat* got alongside her wharf than she was boarded by a crowd of officers and officials apparently in the last stages of hunger and thirst. After their almost unappeasable wants had been attended to, our hero noticed the Governor and Colonel Beeswing riding slowly along the front. He immediately went ashore to greet them, and invite them on board of his ship. They thanked him very kindly, but noticing the crowd on the quarter-deck, pleaded the pressure of business as an excuse for declining his hospitality. Governor Hamilton found a pony for Northwood and urged that he should accompany him to Government House to take "pot luck," being careful to warn him at the same time that the said pot luck was likely to be exceptionally meagre.

The three mounted men thereupon trotted off on their

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ponies in the direction of Government House. They had not ridden more than a mile when a dense column of smoke met their eyes.

"I believe Government House is on fire," Hamilton said, and thereupon changed his trot for a gallop. He rode a much lighter weight than either Beeswing or Northwood, and drew away from them despite their efforts to keep pace with him. At last, however, the Colonel and Northwood galloped their blown ponies through the gate of Government House, and there beheld a sight!

On the sacred tennis-lawns of Government House a band of Dyaks had set up a series of tripods, from each of which hung a Murut head being smoked over slow fires. It is the custom of the Dyaks.

Hamilton, horrified at these sacrilegious rites within the domain of Government House, had dismounted, and was laying about him right and left with a hunting-crop amongst the Dyaks, who were so astonished that it took them some little time to unsheathe their long and heavy *parangs*. Another minute and Governor Hamilton would have fallen a victim to his sense of outraged propriety, but at the critical moment Colonel Beeswing intervened with nothing more formidable than a rattan in his fist, and bade the Dyaks be quiet. Somehow, these savages recognized the Colonel as their chief and submitted to his will. Northwood, who had ridden his pony to a standstill, arrived too late to be of any use.

The Governor for once was fairly furious. He managed to get up some half dozen of his own armed Sikhs, and insisted on having the smoked heads put into a sack, and buried in a remote part of his gardens. The Dyaks viewed this procedure with great disfavour. They growled a lot, and then they set to work polishing up their shining, deadly *parangs*. When they had satisfied themselves that they had got a razor-edge on their weapons, they tramped down to the beach and getting into their canoes paddled briskly away to the mainland.

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"What does that mean?" asked the Governor.

"It means," said Colonel Beeswing, "that those blackguards are going across to the mainland to take as many heads or more, to replace the lot you had buried in the sack at the back of your gardens. If you had let those Dyaks take away their heads with them, as they wanted to do, you would have spared some Murut village a bloody attack this very night. Heads will be severed from many a neck within the next few hours because you chose to interfere with Dyak customs!"

Hamilton turned very pale. He quite forgot that he had invited Northwood to dinner. He simply went into his bedroom, turned out his light, and tossed about during a sleepless and mosquito-haunted night on his hard couch.

"There is nothing to be got here," quoth Colonel Beeswing as coolly as ever. "The poor Governor is a bit hipped, and in any case, I think we got through his last tin of sardines, and his last drop of whisky some time to-day. Suppose we jog along quietly on foot to the *Paklat*. Our ponies are about dead, I should think."

Once on board the *Paklat* they sat down to dinner with a crowd of uninvited guests. Colonel Beeswing, after a protracted poker game, declared that he would sooner sleep on board the *Paklat* than go back to his comfortless quarters on shore. He crawled into a canvas cot which was slung on deck and went fast asleep. Northwood found that a couple of Chartered men had appropriated his cabin and were snoring sonorously on the bunk and the couch. Not so much as a long chair was vacant! Finally the faithful Lapis found a blanket, in which his master was fain to roll himself up and sleep as best he could on the ship's deck.

Early next morning, the whole crowd cast off dull sloth to demand vociferously tea, coffee, cocktails and whiskies and sodas. Colonel Beeswing³ asked Johnnie what he

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thought of the relative merits of cocoa or gin and bitters. Johnnie suggested *both*, and was taken at his word.

Northwood's friends remained to breakfast and some of them to tiffin.

As for his main quest, the recovery of the large sums due to his father, it proved to be a singularly elusive business. Some of the biggest creditors disappeared into space during Northwood's visit; while those who took the trouble to remain pleaded the Murut rebellion, the drought, and finally (like the celebrated curate) said that they had no money.

Northwood next went up the Brunei River to see H.H. the Sultan, who owed the Northwood estate some thousands of dollars. The worthy Inchi Mahomed said that there would be no difficulty in arranging an audience, but he begged Johnnie to say nothing about money matters. The Court of Brunei was terribly hard up, it would appear, and the Sultan was looking in all directions for cash for his own private needs.

After being taken to see the tombs of the previous Sultans of Brunei, Northwood was ushered into the Royal presence. His Highness was seated on his throne under a canopy, which somehow suggested a gilt and vermilion bedstead, and was surrounded by the usual number of his chiefs. After the inevitable compliments had been offered by Inchi Mahomed, the Sultan's interpreter informed Northwood, amongst other things, that His Highness had reached the age of one thousand years, and was glad to see his white friend, whose father had ever enjoyed his protection and confidence.

Northwood thereupon presented his gift, a polished case containing a pair of ivory handled and electro-plated revolvers, with a number of cartridges neatly fitted into a board covered with green baize. The Sultan gazed on the glittering weapons with much approval, and handed the case to one of his pet attendants—a horrid-looking

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youth, who promptly loaded one of the revolvers, and taking a fair aim at Northwood buzzed a couple of bullets at him within an inch or two of his ear. The whole Court of Brunei lost its usual gravity over this excellent joke and broke out into grins and absolute laughter. A faint smile flickered over the wan countenance of H.H. the Sultan, as with a gesture of his hand he signified his Royal pleasure that there should be no more target-practice.

Northwood was then offered a *roko*, a kind of cigar, about a foot long, covered with palm-leaf, and filled with perfectly vile native tobacco. A small cup of inconceivably horrid coffee accompanied the *roko*. It may be safely said that the Royal *roko* and the Royal coffee upset Johnnie Northwood much more than the pistol-shots of the previous moment.

These hearty greetings having been exchanged, Northwood demanded the payment of certain monies due to his late father, and also the abolition of the exorbitant tonnage dues paid by the *Paklat* every time she entered the Brunei River.

There was much whispering and chattering when Northwood had finished speaking. After an uneasy half hour had been spent in this way, the Sultan was pleased to announce that he could pay no debts at present, owing to the disturbed state of the country, but that if Tuan Northwood would forego any immediate payment of his claims, he, on his part, would abolish the objectionable tonnage dues and allow the *Paklat* to come and go without paying a penny to the Government of Brunei.

Northwood had the sense to say that he accepted the Royal offer, provided that the *surat* abolishing the tonnage dues should be handed to him at once.

After interminable waiting, the desired document, exquisitely written in Arabic characters and adorned with the Royal *chop* and sign manual, was delivered. Inchi Mahomed glanced over it and made a sign that it was all right. Thereupon the famished and wearied Northwood

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took his farewell amidst a flood of compliments, in the course of which he piously expressed the hope that the Cousin of the Stars and the Brother of the Sun, etc., etc., might live to grace the throne of Brunei for yet another thousand years to the infinite joy of his people and the gratification of his Sister Victoria, Queen of England.

Once he was on board the *Paklat*, Northwood, during the course of a hurried meal, wondered at his extraordinary measure of success concerning the abolition of the tonnage dues. They had not been paid for that voyage and would not be paid; that was a fact. Northwood knew perfectly well that for something like twenty years his father had tried to get rid of this incubus without success. That he should come off with flying colours where his father had consistently failed was wholly inexplicable.

That evening he dined with the Capitan China of Brunei, who received him in splendid style. It was perhaps the greatest phenomenon of the extraordinary conditions of life in Brunei that a large number of industrious and enterprising Chinamen prospered, waxed fat, and did a roaring trade under the miserable and insecure rule of the beggarly Sultan. They imported any quantity of goods from Singapore, and exported sago-flour, gutta, beeswax and rattans to a value which was perfectly astounding.

The Capitan China regaled his guest with a profusion of such delicacies as sharks' fins, birds'-nests, and a variety of perfectly heavenly curries and sambals. Heidsieck's champagne flowed freely the whole time, until the Capitan China and his countrymen took to drinking brandy in tumblers.

The Capitan China had a rare great skull on him, but the liquor began to tell on him in the end, as his broad face, flushed to the colour of virgin copper, testified.

"Now, Tuan," he wheedled, "what was your business with the Sultan? You were at the palace all day. Asking

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him to pay his debts? *Hai yah!* I didn't think you were quite such a *bodoh* as to waste your time that way. It would puzzle the Sultan to find five dollars in his treasury. Confess you have been getting mineral concessions or something out of him! Oh, you don't want mineral concessions? WHAT! *You got the Sultan to abolish the tonnage dues!* The *babi!* the *bangsat*, etc., the pig, the thief, the son of some sad animal! Why, the beast sold me the tonnage dues for five thousand dollars last week!"

The excited Chinaman thereupon rose to his feet and began whirling his pigtail round his head while he swore at the Sultan until he nearly fainted.

So Northwood was now able to understand the secret of his success at the palace that day. Well, the Sultan had cheated the Capitan China for once, but no doubt His Highness would be made to pay for his trick in the end. Meanwhile Northwood had the Sultan's *surat* and that held good even in Brunei.

Northwood sailed for Labuan next day, where he picked up Colonel Beeswing and some two hundred of his armed ruffians, whom he landed at Kudat, a point which was seriously threatened by the Murut rebels. The Colonel attacked the enemy at the earliest possible moment, and taking them completely by surprise drove them back into their jungles with great slaughter. Kudat was thereby relieved from any further peril. Colonel Beeswing had, moreover, taken a number of prisoners, who were a source of considerable embarrassment to him, as it was dangerous to let them go and it was difficult to spare sufficient men to guard them. The Colonel made a strong appeal to Northwood to allow him to use the *Paklat* as a transport in which he might deport his prisoners and have them distributed amongst the plantations and ports on the coast. Thus scattered, the Muruts would no longer be of any danger.

This programme did not suit Northwood at all, but

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as the Colonel insisted that the safety of Kudat and the neighbouring plantations depended upon it, he had to consent to some six hundred Murut prisoners being embarked on the *Paklat* for deportation.

Poor wretches! They looked such a sorry crowd as they were driven on board the *Paklat*. Hungry and verminous, covered mostly with scales like those of a fish, these Muruts were a singularly unattractive type of native. Northwood saw no use in sailing with the prisoners, so he remained behind at Kudat while the *Paklat* landed them at the appointed places on the coast.

He lived at the Residency for the time being, as the guest of Mr. Reggie Larkins, the Acting-Assistant Resident of Kudat.

Reggie was a nice bright lad, a cheery, irresponsible optimist, not nearly so surprised as Northwood was to find that he was in charge of a large province in a state of rebellion. His immediate chief, the newly appointed Resident of Kudat, was away hunting Muruts, so Reggie had Kudat all to himself.

Colonel Beeswing having routed the main body of the Muruts near Kudat, life in that delightful place began to resume its normal aspect. It was enlivened for a brief moment by a visit from a certain Mr. Mixer, who had been sent from Sandakan with some such title as that of Acting Deputy Assistant Commissioner, to deal with some of the Murut chiefs captured during the recent military operations. Mr. Mixer was a big, raw-boned, bull-headed, wall-eyed gentleman, full of good intentions, and quite a kind-hearted soul in his way. But he was maladroit to an extraordinary degree. Sincerely convinced of the integrity of his ideas, he never did anything the right way. He was a great hand at fanning the flames he was sent to extinguish and had not his equal in the art of playing the hose on a drowning man.

Mr. Mixer having decided in his wisdom to hang the

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Murut chiefs, started on his gruesome job with his accustomed and misdirected energy. But his gallows being frail and his ropes being rotten, the execution of the chiefs, which was projected on a very large scale, was not a success. Into the details of this affair there is no necessity to examine. Suffice it to say, that after a fairly ghastly scene, a number of half-hanged Muruts were kept in bonds, while Mr. Mixer went to Kudat in search of new ropes wherewith to hang them again. Mr. Mixer got his new ropes at Kudat and finally managed to strangle the life out of the chiefs.

The Muruts are a congeries of poor, shiftless, marauding and worthless tribes, who manage to drag out a miserable living in their jungles and swamps without the slightest benefit to themselves or others. No doubt they represent some of those races who must necessarily disappear under the improving hand of civilization. Still, Northwood thought it rather rough that even Muruts should be hanged twice. Mr. Mixer was quite satisfied with his proceedings, however, until one fine night he managed to pot a Sikh and a loyal Dyak whom he mistook for prisoners endeavouring to escape during the darkness preceding the dawn. Thereupon his European colleagues, recognizing that Mr. Mixer, in addition to being abnormally shortsighted, was much too handy with his revolver, persuaded him to return to Sandakan with a confidential report of considerable length on the Murut rebellion and its repression. On his arrival at Sandakan he was immediately promoted to the rank of Resident.

Such incidents as that of the repression of the Murut rebellion are inevitable in the history of European expansion in savage countries. They have happened before and will happen again. But poor Mixer was by no means a bad type. He had plenty of pluck, and was generally of a humane character. If occasionally he blundered into hanging or shooting the wrong men, it was simply because he suffered from a sort of myopia, mental

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as well as physical. There were many worse men in Borneo.

At last the *Paklat* returned to Kudat, and Northwood was free to continue his interrupted voyage. He went *viâ* Sandakan to Dampier Bay, to have a look at the wonderful tobacco-estate upon which so much of his father's money had been spent.

Dampier Bay looked very lovely in the early morning. Its waters are so cool and sweet that, despite all warnings about sharks, young Northwood must needs go overboard, followed by his gigantic and faithful mastiff. Northwood and Lion had a splendid swim in water so transparent that the keel of the *Paklat* was clearly visible. When, however, Northwood saw some Chinese cargo boats coming alongside the *Paklat* piled up with bales of sharks' fins, he thought it was about the right time to get on board again and have his morning coffee.

Shortly afterwards Northwood landed to have a look at the estate. Truly, it presented a goodly sight. Far and wide stretched endless fields of young tobacco-plants of a tender green, which looked very much like blossoming into dividends of one hundred per cent., after the fashion of certain Sumatra estates.

On the pier he was met by George Monk, the manager of the estate, and some of his assistants, with a hearty welcome.

"We thought you were never coming, but we are dashed glad to see you!" was the chorus.

Monk was a sturdy, capable man, but Northwood noted with anxiety that he and his European assistants looked pale and haggard and very much wasted. Still, the mere arrival of a steamer in Dampier Bay cheered these Englishmen, hidden away in an obscure district of Borneo. The *Paklat* brought letters and newspapers from home and a supply of many things urgently needed.

The day was spent in a progress over the Dampier Bay

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estate. On the surface everything seemed splendid. Trim rows of sheds and godowns looked most business-like. A steam launch towing some lighters up the river added animation to a scene already delightful to the speculative eye. Gangs of Chinese coolies were busy weeding out the fields, which were as carefully cultivated as the tulip-beds of Holland.

But it was not until he saw the so-called hospital that a chill struck Northwood's heart and made him doubt. Here in a vast dismal attap shed were scores of hapless Chinese coolies, scarce covered with a few cotton rags, quivering with malarial fever. The estate doctor—for a doctor there was—considered that he had done his duty when he gave these poor shivering wretches a few grains of quinine per day. Then he left them to rot and perish as fast as the devil chose. Northwood quailed at this gruesome sight.

"My dear Monk," he gasped, "what's all this? These poor fellows must have blankets when they are down with fever. They can't sweat without blankets, and you can't get over a malarial fever without blankets. Blankets are cheap enough in Singapore, and I'll send up a few bales of them by next steamer."

There appears to be nothing terrible about such a proposal, but it lashed George Monk into a perfect fury.

"Blankets for coolies!" he yelled. "Who ever heard of such damned nonsense? You may send up forty thousand bales of blankets, but not a blanket will be issued with my permission. Am I the manager or am I not?"

Monk's own eyes were blazing with fever as he shouted down Johnnie Northwood, a thing by no means easily done.

Just then a gang of Javanese wood-cutters went past in a ragged, dismal procession. They were few in numbers, and all of them looked very ill. Northwood remembered that he had sent no less than six hundred able-bodied

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Javanese to fell the forests of Dampier Bay and to clear the ground for tobacco-planting. On inquiry he found that of the six hundred some eighty-five still survived, the remainder having been put under ground. A large area of forest had been cleared and rendered fit for tobacco cultivation at the expense of some hundreds of lives.

Monk explained that the worst was over, and that the death-rate on the Dampier Bay estate was now on the down-grade.

But Northwood was perfectly aghast at a state of affairs which appeared to be quite natural to the manager. Dividends of one hundred per cent. appeared in a new and horrid light. However, as far as dividends were concerned, Northwood had no reason to worry himself had he but known it. The Dampier Bay estate never paid a dividend up to the end of its costly existence.

Northwood dined with Monk in the hut which he had built for himself. The planter had floored off one-half of the solitary room; the rest was merely beaten earth. They had their meal at a table on the little plank platform, and when Northwood incautiously pushed his chair back it went over the edge, and its occupant fell to the earthen floor beneath to the great amusement of Monk.

Dinner consisted of a couple of tins and a boiled fowl. Monk took his quinine-bottle from a shelf, shook a few grains of it into the palm of his hand, licked the dose up with his tongue, and washed it down with a little weak whisky and water. Then slapping the very uninviting bird with a grimy knife, he said: "Have some boiled babby, Northwood?" The two men made a languid effort to chew a bit of the dead hen, but soon gave it up as a bad job. They ate practically nothing. George Monk, feeling shivery, got into a small iron cot, while Northwood piled some blankets on him. Remonstrances as to the folly of living in this comfortless way, for which

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there was no earthly reason, were lost on Monk, who said :
" Anything was good enough for a planter ! "

Northwood thought sorrowfully enough, as he went off to his ship, that if the European staff refused to take the slightest care of themselves, it was small wonder if they were indifferent to the health and comfort of their coolies. Undoubtedly the lot of them were in that abnormal state of mind produced by long continued attacks of fever, which, however, except on rare occasions, allowed them to work each day on the plantation. The forthcoming crop looked magnificent so far, but Northwood left Dampier Bay with a heavy heart and oppressed with sinister forebodings.

On his return to Singapore, Northwood reported the state of affairs at Dampier Bay to his syndicate. The gentlemen of which it was formed regretted the loss of life on the plantation, chiefly as representing the loss of a large number of dollars. They took the view that George Monk understood his business, and must act as he judged best. Negotiations were on foot to form a company in London with a large capital to take over the Dampier Bay property on terms which would give each member of the syndicate a handsome profit. Now that the forest had been cleared and the virgin soil brought under cultivation, the enormous mortality amongst the natives and the fevers of the European staff would cease. In any case, these were problems for the new company and not for a syndicate about to terminate its existence.

As for other matters, Northwood found that the man whom he had trusted to carry on negotiations for the transfer of his late father's Borneo trade to the firm of Holt had betrayed his confidence, had never sent his proposals to Liverpool, and was busy with preparations for the conquest of the Borneo trade on his own behalf and the extermination of the Northwood interest. " War to the knife " was this gentleman's motto. He had sent to England for two steamers, which had now arrived and

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were being rapidly got ready for the coming struggle. Fortunately, however, the Chinese and native traders clung tenaciously to the Northwoods, as long as there was a Northwood alive, and the opposition boats were sent away at due intervals almost empty, while the *Paklat* was loaded down to her marks, and swarmed with passengers.

But Northwood knew that his powerful enemy must wear him down in time by the sheer weight of money, and having failed to find anything but active hostility amongst shipowners who flew the British flag, he was compelled by motives of self-preservation to think of foreign support.

He, therefore, went to the great German firm of Bismarck, Moltke and Co., a concern which had arisen from small beginnings to be a power overshadowing the entire trade of a vast territory in the Far East and was now strong enough to fight any competitor.

Poor Northwood, who had been so terribly outwitted by the man in whom he had put his trust, and who found himself received with either contempt or apathy by the British shipping concerns, was met by the Germans with a courtesy and consideration which soothed his wounded feelings like a healing balm. Instead of being laughed at, or being accused of trying to work a bluff, he was told by the Germans that if his representations would stand the test of inquiry they were willing to extend their business in the direction of British Borneo. They agreed to Northwood's terms without any difficulty, but insisted that Mrs. Northwood should retain an interest for six months, so that in the event of the trade being run to a loss for that period she should bear one-half of such loss, and the proposed agreement should there and then be cancelled. Northwood, who was confident of his ability to hold the Borneo trade for six months, obtained the consent of his mother to the terms offered.

At the end of the six months, the German house paid Mrs. Northwood, not only the sum originally stipulated,

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but one-half of a very handsome profit earned during the period by the *Paklat*. The German colours were then hoisted on the *Paklat* and the Northwood interest in the Borneo shipping trade came to an end, after a long and honourable existence.

The Germans put other boats on the line, and for a long time there was a determined and very costly struggle between the Liverpool house to whom Northwood had originally meant his business to go, and the German firm. In the end the victory went to the Germans. Bismarck, Moltke and Co. now control the whole of the tonnage of a vast seaboard under the British flag. The ports are British, but the only steamers which carry the trade fly the German colours !

CHAPTER XXXII

THE ANNAM VENTURE

HOWEVER complicated Northwood's private affairs might be, they did not prevent him from promoting the interests of the Golconda Company with a never-flagging energy. Thanks to the assistance of a numerous and capable staff, he was enabled to extend the company's coaling and shipping interests far and wide. Once more he had organized success.

His work commenced at six a.m., when he read the signals on the flagstaff through his telescope, and he was often down at the coal-wharves from midnight into the small hours, hurrying the despatch of a transport or a tea steamer from China. He took it out of himself considerably, but success is a magic medicine for combating physical fatigue in any climate.

Having got everything in beautiful working order at Singapore, he now began to think seriously about the Annam trade, and spent as much of his time as he could spare with Giuseppe Tambourini, and his old friend Father Leblanc. These three men of three different nationalities, each of whom offered such a striking contrast to the other two, planned the peaceful invasion of unknown Annam, and the opening up an entirely new trade on their own lines.

The worthy priest was a singularly able man of business, entrusted by his Church with the investment of great sums of money. He had some practical knowledge of Cambodia and much sound information about the state of affairs in Annam. The Roman Catholic Church wields

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a very powerful sway in Annam, and can do much to make or mar the fortunes of a venture, whether religious, political, or commercial.

Briefly, the plan adopted was that Northwood should take command of the whole campaign with the assistance of Giuseppe's younger brother Tonio, and Louis Chassepôt, who had left his father's estate and was anxious for employment. It was very advisable to have a Frenchman connected with the scheme. The two Tambourini steamers *Padova* and *Genova* were estimated as being sufficient to open up the trade between Annam and Singapore, but as a small coasting-steamer was indispensable to keep up communications between the different points of the Annam coast, Northwood got permission to purchase the *Adonis* for this purpose. This last acquisition to the Annam trading fleet belied its name considerably. The *Adonis* was a tubby, round-bottomed little packet of seventy-five tons register, familiarly known in Singapore as the *Flying Coconut*, a nickname which described the vessel somewhat aptly. The *Adonis* had achieved the feat of turning turtle in one of the Sumatra rivers and floating down-stream bottom up, until she stranded on a mud-bank. After which, the *Adonis* was advertised for sale. Ship and cargo were bought for a mere song by an enterprising person, who made money out of his purchase. It turned out that the holds of the little steamer were so tightly packed with bales of Sumatra tobacco that the water could not penetrate into them. The bulk of a very fine lot of tobacco was not damaged by the extraordinary performance of the *Adonis*, and the speculator got an unexpected haul out of the cargo.

Nobody, however, would make a bid for the steamer herself; people said they had no use for a vessel of that kind, and so the *Adonis* was left to rust at the extreme end of the Tanjong Pagar Wharf, in company with two or three other unsaleable craft, until Northwood took a fancy to her, chiefly because she could be got exceedingly cheap

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and was in fairly sound order. It seemed a pretty weird idea to send a boat of the size, build, and past history of the *Adonis* up the China Sea, but Northwood had his own ideas on the subject, and, besides, it is not every day that a man can pick up an entire steamer, including hull, engines, the funnel, and a whole lot of cabins for eight hundred pounds. Suffice it to say that once off the stormy Annam coast the *Adonis* proved to be a seaworthy boat in the roughest of weather.

It had been Northwood's idea to sail the *Adonis* with a native pilot and engine-driver, but he found to his dismay that, according to the rules of his company, he must insure the hull of the *Adonis*, and this necessitated having a duly qualified European master and engineer on board the vessel. This was a matter entailing, not only a very heavy expense, but all sorts of difficulties. The job of working the little steamer on the Annam coast offered few inducements to decent, steady men.

In the end he picked up a certain Captain Mumbles for the command of the *Adonis* and a Mr. McScratchie to be the chief and only engineer.

Captain Mumbles was a quiet, saturnine sort of man, down on his luck and out of a job, since putting his last steamer ashore. Mr. McScratchie, on the other hand, was a brisk and self-assertive Scot, who knew that he was a good engineer, and haggled desperately for his own terms, which he got, before he would take up his job. Both were very temperate men, and Northwood, devoutly hoping that they would refrain from quarrelling with each other and the French officials on the coast, put Louis Chassepôt on board as the agent, and sent off the *Adonis* to wait for him at Phanrang.

The *Genova* was also sent off to Phanrang with Tonio Tambourini on board as supercargo, while the *Padova* was ordered to wait at Singapore for instructions.

As for Northwood himself, he took the next French mail-boat for Saigon, where he had to make all sorts of

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arrangements with his agents and others before proceeding to Annam. Having completed his business as expeditiously as the intense heat and the siesta system of that gay and beautiful city of Saigon permitted, he took passage for Haiphong by the French packet, which anchored for a couple of hours off Phanrang to land the mails for that particular district of Annam.

Louis Chassepôt and Tonio Tambourini came off to meet him. No sooner had Northwood got into their boat than the two men, who were in a state of suppressed excitement all the time, broke out into loud accusations against each other. The Frenchman demanded that the Italian should be immediately dismissed, whereupon the Italian swore he would have the Frenchman arrested and thrown into prison. Northwood, highly disgusted with this scandalous scene, threatened to ship them off in a junk to Saigon that very day if they would not respect his authority and instantly stop their miserable recriminations.

Just then the boat's keel grated on the beach and Northwood landed at Phanrang. It is a miserable-looking place. Under a perfectly blistering sun, square miles of sand threw up a blinding glare. In the distance some low, barren, burnt-up hills lent no enchantment to the view. A few mean, whitewashed buildings, over which floated the French tricolour, did not add much to the local colour. The Residency, the barracks, and the customs house were the architectural triumphs of Phanrang. The native quarter was simply hideous. The Annamite huts were mere kennels, while the lanes between them so narrow that when the broad-shouldered Northwood followed Tonio to his residence, he brushed the edges of the roofs on each side of the street. Men, women and children swarmed in the constricted thoroughfares of Phanrang.

Northwood thought that never since the days of the Murut rebellion had he seen such a degenerate and miserable race ; but he had yet to learn that the Annamites

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are miles ahead of the Muruts, and are really a very clever and intelligent race in many respects.

Emerging from the filthy native town, Northwood and his two colleagues reached the Chinese quarter, where Tonio had taken up his residence and opened his office. The Chinamen of Phanrang dwell in solid, comfortable houses with some ground fenced in round them. Their fine, well-built junks, drawn up on the beach, offered as great a contrast to the crazy bamboo craft of the natives as did the jolly, fat, well-dressed Chinaman to the nearly naked, undersized, half-nourished Annamite. As a matter of fact, the Chinamen make all the money in Phanrang, while the Annamites do all the work for next to nothing.

That is to say, the Annamites are grievously sweated by the ingenious Chinaman, who is also accused of seducing them into spending their scanty earnings in opium and alcohol.

Louis Chassepôt was very indignant with Tonio for identifying himself with the Chinese interest in Phanrang. What could the Resident and his officials think of an Italian who lived and smoked opium with a lot of Chinamen? Tonio had bought a cargo of salt for the *Genova*! Yes, but he purchased it from his Chinese friends at fifty per cent. more than they paid to the Annamites for it! Of course, if Tonio got his share of the fifty per cent., Louis Chassepôt could understand the transaction, but not otherwise.

At this point Tonio made such a horrid row as to render further conversation impossible, but amidst his yells and imprecations Northwood ascertained that he accused Louis of having ordered the *Adonis* into a lagoon from which the vessel could not get out again.

Northwood anxiously asked where the *Adonis* might really be at that moment. The Frenchman pointed to a white speck in the distant lagoon. Northwood ordered him off to the steamer at once, and then sat down to listen to what the excited Tonio had to say for himself.

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Tonio's story was that Louis Chassepôt, having taken up his quarters on board the *Adonis*, because nothing on shore was good enough for him, ordered the boat into the lagoon for the sole reason that he did not like the rolling motion when she lay at anchor in the roadstead. The *Adonis* had grounded on a sandbank getting into the lagoon, and scraped all the paint off her bottom. Worst of all, the French mail steamer *Saigon* had gone badly ashore near Quinhon with a valuable cargo, but when Tonio suggested that the *Adonis* should proceed to the wreck to take off the passengers and commence salvage operations no one would listen to him. A fortune had been thrown away through the sheer laziness of Chassepôt.

Leaving Tonio at the Chinese *kampung*, Northwood got into a boat and went off to the *Adonis*. Here he found that Chassepôt and Captain Mumbles were not on speaking terms, the last occasion on which they had had any conversation being when Chassepôt had called Mumbles an English pig, and Mumbles had said something about a French swine! Mumbles was sulking, while Chassepôt was working himself into a frenzy. Meanwhile, the *Adonis* was lying idle in the lagoon, when she ought to have been making money which would have paid for her cost ten times over in a few days. Mr. McScratchie was walking about the decks with his hands in his pockets and a highly-amused and malicious grin on the face of him. It was easy to see that he had been adding fuel to the flames, and that he enjoyed Northwood's unhappy predicament with the greatest zest.

Sick at heart, Northwood ordered Captain Mumbles to get up steam at once, find his way out of the lagoon as best he could, and anchor the *Adonis* off the Residency ready to go to sea at short notice. Louis Chassepôt was told to get into the boat alongside, and tumbling in after him, Northwood settled down for a long and weary pull back to the town. It was not a pleasant journey.

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Chassepôt had simmered down into sulkiness, and was wearing a face which would have disgraced a mule convicted of backsliding. Not a word was exchanged between the two men during some hours in that boat.

It was evening before the pair reached the Residency. The Resident, M. de Langeron, an ex-naval officer, received them very graciously, and was so kind as to ask them to stop to dinner. Northwood, who had been too busy to get anything to eat all day, accepted the invitation with much gratitude. Various officers and officials sat down to table with the Resident. Père Dubulle, of the Foreign Missions, was also a guest on this occasion. After an excellent dinner, which did wonders in the way of smoothing ruffled feelings and making things look brighter, Northwood had a quiet chat with de Langeron and Père Dubulle about the situation. There was no denying the fact that the commencement of the Annam venture was most unfortunate, almost disastrous, in fact; but his newly-found friends urged our hero to persevere, and promised him every assistance in their power.

A point which had to be considered was the fact that the *Adonis* was flying the British flag on a coast belonging to France, in sheer defiance of the *loi de cabotage*, which wisely reserves all coastwise trade for the national colours. The Resident said that he and his colleagues would maintain a discreet silence regarding a very glaring infraction of French law, but he advised Northwood to put the *Adonis* under the French flag as soon as it could conveniently be done. He very kindly offered to find room for Louis Chassepôt at the Residency, so as to avoid the necessity of his coming into contact with Tonio. The young Frenchman having made himself impossible on board of the *Adonis*, this was a welcome solution of a serious difficulty. Père Dubulle volunteered to look after his hot-headed countryman and teach him something of the commercial aspects of Annam.

The anchor lights of the *Adonis* being now visible from

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the Residency, Northwood made his adieux, after repeatedly thanking the kindly Frenchmen who were treating him so generously, and went on board his ship. After giving his orders to the captain to proceed to the wreck of the *Saigon* at daylight, Northwood turned in for a night's rest, thoroughly tired out and not a little discouraged with the result of his first day's work in Annam.

He was on deck at daylight, and found that the weather was anything but pretty. Vast masses of cloud were driving before the wind, and a fairly heavy sea was running. Mumbles said something about drawing the fires and waiting until some other day, but Northwood was peremptory.

"We haven't an hour to lose, Captain Mumbles. Up anchor and off, if you please!"

The captain gave the necessary orders in a very surly fashion, but in a few minutes the *Adonis* was out at sea. It was not so bad at first, but when the little packet got clear of the land and felt the full sweep of the China Sea she knocked about a bit and was a very wet ship. Her speed was nothing much, probably some three or four knots over the ground. She was flying light, and being built originally for a river passenger trade, her deck had a substantial superstructure of cabins, which made her a very comfortable and even luxurious ship, but a bit top-heavy in a seaway.

Northwood had had two large cabins knocked into one for his own especial use. It made a singularly spacious and comfortable cabin, in which he had fitted a large desk, a Milner's safe, and an iron cot, so that he had his office, bedroom and armoury in one; for his rifles and guns were neatly arranged in a rack constructed after his own designs. The captain and chief engineer were lodged in fine, airy cabins, such as they would not have in a coasting steamer of twenty times the size of the *Adonis*.

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Northwood sat down to the desk in his cabin and set to work to overhaul the arrears of his correspondence. In the midst of this he was more than surprised when Mr. McScratchie, opening the door without any ceremony, coolly walked in and sat himself down on a chair.

"Nice cabin you've got, Mr. Northwood," said the engineer. "Mighty nice! Now, as you won't be cruisin' about in the *Adonis* all the time, you havin' other jobs ashore, I'm just thinkin' this same cabin should belong to me as the chief! Ye ken what I mean? When you do come aboard for a trip, what's wrong with one o' they planters' cabins, you can't possibly want anything more comfy. What about handing over this cabin to me?"

Northwood stared at the man in blank amazement, and then recovering himself, proceeded to take short order with him. He reminded the fellow that he had last served in a small Chinese coaster, where he lived in a sort of hutch in a dark and dirty alley way, and had to work like a dog on half the pay on allowances he got for doing very little on board the *Adonis*. Finally, he told McScratchie that there was such a place as the engine-room, and that it was the proper and suitable place for the chief engineer, who should have something better to do than to spend his time talking rot in the after cabins.

The amiable McScratchie jumped to his feet and left the cabin. He also left the cabin door wide open, so that Northwood, after closing it, had to pick up lots of papers which had been scattered all over the place by the wind.

Towards sundown, Northwood, wearied with his desk-work, skipped up the ladder to the top of the deck-house, from which he commanded a view of the whole of his little ship and the surrounding scenery. He greedily took in a few sniffs of the reviving sea breezes, which, truth to say, were being wafted about in sufficient quantity. He had barely begun to enjoy himself when he observed the figures of Mumbles and McScratchie in close confab by

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the big steering-wheel aft. The two worthies no sooner saw Northwood's commanding figure on the upper deck, than they shinned up the after ladder and confronted him with an insolent bearing which it was difficult to tolerate.

Captain Mumbles, evidently egged on by the engineer, nervously growled: "Look here, Mr. Northwood. We've stood this long enough! The *Adonis* can't make headway any longer, and we intend going back to Phanrang! We thought it best to tell you about it first!"

"Go back to Phanrang!" roared Northwood. "You'll do nothing of the kind! Why, the weather is moderating every minute and by daylight we shall be in smooth water! Any fool can tell that the wind is taking off and that the sky is clearing as fast as it can. I defy you to go back to Phanrang. Am I not literally in the same boat with you? Is my skin not as much worth as yours? Do you think it will pay me to get drowned? Keep your course for the wreck of the *Saigon*, or I'll have you two locked up in a cabin, and sail the *Adonis* with the serang and the greasers in the engine-room. The crew will do what I tell them, and don't you forget it!"

Mumbles and McScratchie had put in some of their spare time in "hazing" the men under their command, and they knew a bit of Northwood's character, so they slouched off the upper deck without saying another word.

Northwood had to sit down to dinner with these two scoundrels, and during the abundant but cheerless meal, he did not exchange a word with either of them. McScratchie started a sort of soliloquy, to the effect that wild harum-scarum boys who had ruined their fathers might go cruising about in *Flying Coconuts* irrespective of the doom of respectable captains and chief engineers—who were decent married men, mind you! The thing was unendurable, so Northwood got up in the middle of his dinner and retired to his cabin.

Things had got to a breaking-point, and Northwood

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determined to get rid of the pair at the first reasonable opportunity which they gave him.

Next morning broke bright and beautiful. The sea was smooth and crystal-clear, while the sky overhead was of a heavenly blue. The brave old *Adonis* skimmed over the tranquil element at her best speed of nine knots. Nothing could stop the *Flying Coconut* in a dead calm. True, the heat got a bit pronounced, but after all it was enjoyable. Northwood put in some more work at his desk, and then lazed about a bit. In order to prevent any further trouble with Mumbles and McScratchie he had his tiffin served in his cabin, and enjoyed his solitary meal immensely.

At five p.m. the wreck of the *Saigon* was sighted. The fine mail steamer looked all right, except that she listed considerably over to starboard. She was apparently intact, and her masts and spars looked as shipshape as possible. All the same, the steamer was hanging on to a sort of pinnacle rock, with her lower holds full of water—a wreck past saving. She was surrounded by a perfect swarm of junks and Annamite boats. A small steamer flying the French flag was fussily towing a string of deeply-laden junks in the direction of Quinhon. Northwood realized that he had arrived on the scene just a little too late, and that salvage operations were now in full swing. The wreck happened to lie a great deal to the north of Quinhon, so it was late in the evening when the *Adonis* dropped her anchor in the waters of the little French port.

Northwood went ashore at once and was most warmly welcomed by the Resident. M. de Carfort was a fine, handsome fellow, possessing to the highest degree the charming manner of a French gentleman. He suggested that Northwood should stay to a late dinner or, rather, supper, which he was giving to the shipwrecked passengers of the *Saigon*, and would take no denial. Madame de Carfort, a very pretty and exquisite lady, supported her

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husband's entreaties, so there was nothing for it but to accept, albeit Northwood thought that he might be very much in the way.

De Carfort asked him to talk matters over with him first in his study. M. de Langeron had telegraphed a long and particularly kind account of Northwood and the enterprise he was starting, so de Carfort insisted that they were not strangers, but good friends from the first moment.

"You are just the man we want," said the Resident, "and, of course, we will do our best to encourage you. It is a pity you were not here forty-eight hours earlier, you would have saved us endless trouble and made a magnificent profit with which to start your career in Annam. However, you will find plenty to do, and you certainly will not regret having come to Quinhon."

The late arrival of the *Adonis* was very mortifying to poor Northwood, but, of course, he kept up a cheerful appearance and choked down his bitter thoughts.

He learned from the Resident that there was an English lady amongst the shipwrecked passengers who appeared to have been landed at Quinhon for the especial purpose of keeping the French in a state of perpetual surprise and agitation. Her very name was a source of infinite trouble to them, and in Madame Baiyyi Smeetairce Northwood utterly failed to recognize Mrs. Baillie-Smithers, until he had the pleasure of meeting her a little later. De Carfort, who occasionally dropped into polysyllabic words, declared that Madame Baiyyi Smeetairce had metagrabolized and demantibulated the entire community of Quinhon. The plucky woman absolutely refused to leave the wreck until the whole of her bulky baggage was landed, and somehow she had pressed a gang of coolies into her service to carry it over the mountains with her. She arrived in Quinhon without a single article having gone astray, while the unhappy French passengers of both sexes had absolutely nothing but the wet and soiled clothing in which they stood.

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A gong having sounded to announce that the belated supper was ready, de Carfort gathered up his guest under his starboard fin, and marched him into the large and commodious dining-room of the Residency.

Long and obviously improvised tables were already crowded by a hapless lot of nondescript persons, who might once have been ladies and gentlemen, but who were now so soiled and filthy, and so obviously ashamed of themselves, that it was pitiful so much as to look at them. They were evidently very hungry, and had a desperate, starved air about them as they fiddled nervously with their knives and forks. The entrance of de Carfort was hailed with a hardly suppressed sigh of joy and relief. At last these poor people thought that they were going to be fed!

Madame de Carfort went up to her husband, and said in a tone of evident anxiety that Madame Baiyyi Smeetairce had not yet put in an appearance. Apparently nothing could be done without this mysterious lady with a still more mysterious name. Northwood urged that the supper should at once proceed without the presence of his countrywoman. He was certain that the lady herself would be the last to put others to inconvenience. But such was the influence established by this imperious woman, that both de Carfort and his wife seemed to shrink from the possibility of offending her ladyship. While the point was being debated by the anxious trio, the doors at the end of the dining-room were flung wide open, and in sailed Madame Baiyyi Smeetairce in a lovely ball dress, *très décolletée*. She fairly shimmered with jewellery, and her wonderfully elaborate and artistic coiffure bore witness to the fact that she had saved her curling-tongs and spirit-lamp from the wreck of the *Saigon*.

Everybody gasped at the sight of this wonderful apparition. "*Mais, c'est honteux!*" cried a pretty little Frenchwoman, with a dirty face and touzled hair, clothed in what had no doubt been a smart white frock, but which

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now looked like a very sticky and dirty sheet, hanging in clammy folds round her plump figure.

The lady in the ball-dress was quite happy, however. She was a tall and rather spare blonde, quite pretty in her own commanding way. She marched straight up to Northwood and said: "Ah! I see you're an Englishman! Mr. Northwood, I suppose? I am Mrs. Baillie-Smithers, of Hong-Kong. So delighted to meet you, to be sure. Supper? Yes, I think I should like some! Of course, you will sit next to me!"

So saying, Mrs. Baillie-Smithers led the way to the head of the table. With a wave of her white hand, she wafted a crumpled French colonel and his dishevelled wife out of their seats, and sat herself next to the Resident, patting the empty chair next to her to signify that Northwood was to occupy the recently vacated place. Turning her bare and shapely shoulders on the Resident, she immediately started an animated monologue with her dumbfounded countryman.

"Fancy!" she bubbled. "Fancy! that I was actually carried over the mountains in a beastly net made of coarse ropes slung to a bamboo, hitched on to a lot of Annamite coolies. I didn't mind it so much, until I saw a lot of pigs being carried the same way, and then I began to feel pretty stuffy! The first thing I said to the Resident, and, of course, I speak French, was '*Je ne suis pas cochon, monsieur!*' and he said he was glad to hear it. What do you think he meant by that?"

Northwood replied diplomatically and untruthfully that he really did not know.

As in duty bound, he offered to take Mrs. Baillie-Smithers to Saigon, in the *Adonis*, but to his great relief, the fair lady said that she would prefer to wait for the steamer which had been telegraphed for from Hong-Kong. She added that the *Adonis* was a dear, trotty little boat, with a lovely name, and she frankly told Mr. Northwood that she liked him very much, but she had her doubts

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as to whether his tiny craft had room to carry all her luggage without some risk of its being damaged. Johnnie commended her prudence, and having told her about the *Flying Coconut* affair, he effectually put her off cruising about the China Sea on board of the *Adonis*, albeit she continued to claim him for her own during his sojourn at Quinhon.

The supper was got through in a hurry and was, therefore, of short duration. The French refugees would have been quite happy if they had been left to themselves, but the presence of the English couple worried them exceedingly. Northwood, in his raiment of spotless white, and Mrs. Baillie-Smithers in her ball-dress, contrasted much too sharply with the soiled and slatternly victims of the wreck seated at the same table. The French ladies and gentlemen did not like it at all, and hastened to make themselves scarce.

After supper Northwood was able to have a little conversation with his host and hostess. He naturally asked if he could be of any use to them in their present predicament. Supplies of food and of delicacies were ample, but the Resident was rather bothered where to put all his friends for the night. Northwood hit on the brilliant idea of finding beds for at least a dozen of the shipwrecked people on board the *Adonis*, anchored at about a cable's length from the shore, and therefore easily accessible. De Carfort was delighted with the idea. It solved a very troublesome problem for him. Mrs. Baillie-Smithers had, of course, secured one of the best bedrooms in the Residency for herself, and absolutely declined to allow any other woman to share it with her.

Northwood duly mustered his French contingent, and embarked it on board of the *Adonis*. Having seen these people made comfortable and contented, he went to sleep on a settee in the saloon, having given up his own cabin to two French ladies, who thereupon forgave him for being so clean and smart in his spotless white.

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He was up bright and early next morning, seeing that his guests had their coffee and biscuits and some small delicacies which the steward was able to serve at short notice. They were all exceedingly grateful to him. Captain Mumbles went about growling that his ship was being turned into a French floating café, and carefully refrained from being of the slightest use to anybody. McScratchie had locked himself in his cabin, to prevent his being contaminated by the French, and did not show up. As he was going ashore, Northwood got hold of his skipper, and ordering steam for six p.m., advised him that the *Adonis* would load a full cargo for Saigon direct, that bills of lading would be sent with each batch of cargo, which Mumbles would sign, on the tally being found correct, and return to bearer.

Northwood immediately proceeded to the Residency, and found himself in for a busy day. The cargo from the wreck had been sold by auction as it arrived, and the buyers, having got any amount of valuable stuff for next door to nothing, were feverishly anxious to ship it to Saigon at the first opportunity. Almost all the passengers wanted to secure a berth in the *Adonis*.

Great was the surprise of Northwood to find that the agent of the Messageries Maritimes was no other than Jules de Beauregard, the son of the Marseilles agent of Northwood and Son in the palmy days of yore. Jules met him with exuberant joy, and told him, amongst other things, that both his pretty sisters were married. Ah! those delightful sisters, with *both* of whom Johnnie had fallen desperately in love during his memorable sojourn in Marseilles! Well, there was no time now to think of lovely young women. Northwood went with Jules to his little office and made arrangements with him to load the *Adonis* and book up her passenger accommodation. There was a regular sort of auction for the limited space on board of the *Adonis*, and Northwood made a hasty estimate that the vessel would earn enough on her short

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trip to Saigon to pay her expenses for the next three months.

At the M. M. office Northwood also met M. Alphonse Legros, the fortunate person who had taken the contract for salvaging the cargo of the *Saigon*, and was making a fortune out of it. He was a cheery, dapper little man, who had had a very poor time of it in Annam in spite of his evident capacity for work, but he had been hindered throughout by want of capital, without which it is indeed difficult to do anything in a new country. Northwood suggested that they might go into partnership over the salvage operations, and offered him handsome terms for a half share in the venture; but the clever little Frenchman said he preferred to run the risk of the weather and keep what he had got.

"It is most fortunate for me that you happened to be just a little too late," said Legros. "My poor old *raftot*, the *Marie Louise*, is the only property I possess, and the boat is almost done. She is just able to tow the junks and the rafts from the wreck to the shore in smooth water. But she is doing that all right, and with the swarm of Annamite coolies I have at work on board, I am turning out the cargo at a great rate with very primitive appliances. I know this coast, and am confident that the weather will hold for the next few days, by which time I shall have done my work. Of course, the first heavy squall will blow the *Saigon* off the rocks and she will sink like a stone in a hundred fathoms of water."

Northwood, much as he regretted having lost such a valuable prize as the *Saigon*, assured the worthy Legros that he was delighted that it had fallen into such excellent hands. Jules insisted that his two friends should remain to a very excellent *déjeuner à la fourchette*, after which Northwood returned to the Residency, where he found de Carfort and Père Dulac of the Missions Étrangères waiting for him. It was decided that Northwood should go to the Annamite settlement with the priest to negotiate

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a cargo of salt for the *Padova*. Père Dulac was a tall man, of military carriage, who had formerly served in a cuirassier regiment. There was still much of the soldier in his manner and conversation, which contrasted rather oddly with his humble black robe.

Northwood had ordered the *Padova* to Quinhon before he left Phanrang. She was now fully due, and it was a source of trouble and anxiety to him that she had not already arrived. The Annamite settlement at Quinhon was not so large as Nai, but it was much cleaner and laid out on better lines. The natives also seemed to be of a superior class. The negotiations with the Annamite salt-dealers were exceedingly tedious and prolonged, in spite of the invaluable aid of Père Dulac. Finally, after two hours of wearisome talk, the whole of the parties interested tramped off to the Residency, where, after further interminable discussions, a contract for the cargo of salt was finally signed and witnessed. Northwood sent off to the *Adonis* for two boxes of specie containing two thousand silver dollars in each, and this considerable sum of money was handed over to the Annamites as a first instalment. They slung the boxes on bamboos and marched off with their treasure. The price at which the contract had been concluded was exceedingly favourable and bade fair to leave a large margin for profit on the deal. The Chinese traders of Quinhon did not at all relish the idea of a foreigner interfering with their monopoly of the salt-trade and hung about in little knots scowling at him evilly.

Meanwhile, the *Adonis* was loading up merrily, and as fast as the bills of lading signed by Captain Mumbles came back from the ship they were handed over to the different shippers. All Quinhon was frantically busy making up a mail for the direct steamer to Saigon.

Late in the afternoon certain complications began to set in. First Mrs. Baillie-Smithers, who was enraged with Northwood because he had something better to do than

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to flirt with her all day, declared that she had changed her mind and insisted on going to Saigon by the *Adonis*. All the cabins were let! Well, she would take Northwood's own cabin; he would not mind a little inconvenience for her sake. But Northwood had already let his cabin to the two French ladies who had occupied it the night before. He had no cabin! When Mrs. Baillie-Smithers found that he would not turn these ladies out to make room for her, she got furious with him, and after favouring the young man with her private opinion of him phrased in terms of quite unexpected crudity, she swore that she would never speak to him again, and kept her word. Thus ended a somewhat painful experience.

Towards dusk the Annamite salt-contractors made their way to the Residency, and flinging the boxes of specie they had received into the road in front of the building, forthwith decamped. This meant that they had been persuaded to return the money by the Chinese traders, and that they thereby notified the cancellation of the contract which had been so tediously negotiated. Fortunately the Resident was not inclined to allow the authority of his *chancellerie*, in which the contract had been signed, to be treated with such disrespect, and promptly turned out an Annamite guard under a French officer to go in pursuit of the misguided aborigines, and fetch them back to the Residency. In due course they were brought back in custody of the guard, and after a few sharp words from the Resident, and a suitable exhortation from the indefatigable Père Dulac, they once more slung the boxes of dollars to their bamboo poles and went off to the native town with them. Northwood could rest assured that the cargo of salt would be forthcoming whenever his steamer was ready to receive it.

All this took time, however, and it was seven p.m. before Northwood could say farewell to his friends at the Residency, and taking delivery of the last batch of mail-bags, proceed on board of the *Adonis*. Père Dulac and

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Jules de Beauregard insisted on accompanying him to see him off on his voyage to Saigon.

The brilliantly lit-up *Adonis* was apparently quite ready for sea. She was blowing off steam, and only needed to pick up her anchors to start on her voyage. After locking up the mail-bags, Northwood found Captain Mumbles in the chart-room, confabbing as usual with Mr. McScratchie.

"Sorry I'm late, Captain Mumbles," said he, "but I was unexpectedly detained on shore. The sooner we're off the better."

"This ship isn't going to sea," drawled Mumbles deliberately, "until she is lightened. She will have to discharge at least half the cargo that's on board of her before she can leave Quinhon. She's down below her marks!"

McScratchie talked loudly of his wife and bairns. He was a decent married man *he* was, and it was no business of his to get drowned in any *Flying Coconut* whatever. Were his widow and children to beg in the streets? Not if he knew it!

This was an unexpected and absolutely sickening blow beneath the belt. Northwood fairly reeled under it. He tried to reason with the two men. He urged that it was the captain who had loaded the ship, and that having signed bills of lading for the cargo on board with his own hand he was in honour bound to deliver it in Saigon. He begged them to avoid the scandal of Englishmen breaking faith with Frenchmen who had trusted them in every way. He even offered to detain the steamer while some of her coals were discharged into a lighter. There was much more coal on board than was necessary for the run to Saigon—but it was all in vain! Mumbles and McScratchie had laid a trap for Northwood and had got him into it successfully.

Leaving the chart-house, Northwood paced the bridge for a few moments to collect his thoughts and form a plan. That a ship crammed with cargo and passengers

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should be hung up in this way was intolerable. Suddenly he saw the red and green lights of a steamer coming into the port. A minute or two later he had made out through the darkness of the night the old-fashioned masts and spars of the *Padova*. Going to the saloon, which was crowded with his French passengers gaily chatting and delighted at the prospect of at last getting to Saigon, Northwood apprised them of the arrival of the *Padova* and begged them to excuse him if he went on board the steamer to give the captain his instructions. The passengers, who little dreamed of the actual predicament, gladly consented to the delay caused by such natural circumstances, and next minute Northwood was in a boat pulling for the *Padova*, just then anchoring astern of the *Adonis*.

Briefly outlining the situation to Captain Bruna of the *Padova*, he returned to the *Adonis* accompanied by the captain, chief officer and second engineer of the Italian steamer. The Italians, after a rapid inspection of the *Adonis*, declared that it would be quite safe to navigate the little steamer to Saigon in her present trim.

This point being settled, Northwood proceeded to deliver his counter-stroke. The whole thing had been so smartly done that he was back on board the *Adonis* before the two conspirators in the chart-room so much as knew that he had left the ship. Mumbles and McScratchie were busy enjoying the discomfiture of Northwood, and hugging themselves over the success of their plot. They were indulging in peals of laughter, when Northwood entered the chart-room with Captain Bruna. Without the loss of a second, Northwood told Mumbles and McScratchie that as they were so anxious about their personal safety, they could not do better than pack up their traps and go on board the *Padova*, which would take them back from Quinhon to Singapore direct. The chief officer and second engineer of the *Padova* had volunteered to navigate the *Adonis* to Saigon. Italians, it appeared, were willing

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to face perils at sea which frightened an Englishman and a Scotsman. Would Mumbles and McScratchie be so kind as to get into the boat which was waiting for them? Ten minutes was the last delay which could be allowed. Time was precious.

Completely taken aback by this unexpected turn of affairs, the conspirators fairly gasped for a moment. Then McScratchie, who, to do him justice, was a really good fighting man, started in to argue the legal point of view. Captain and engineers had to be signed off, wages had to be adjusted, and a variety of things had to be done which demanded time.

"I can't help that!" said Northwood. "All I know is that the *Adonis* sails in ten minutes from now, and I don't want you to risk your valuable lives in this overloaded packet. Your wages will be paid all right. The Harbour Master at Singapore will see to that. If you won't go any other way, I'll have you put into a boat by main force. The serang and crew will see to that little bit of work. Pack up and quit!"

So saying, Northwood left the chart-room with Captain Bruna. Immediately afterwards the scream of the steam-whistle notified the impending departure of the *Adonis*, while the clink of the chain cables made it clear to certain listeners that she was walking up to her anchors.

Northwood meanwhile hurried Captain Bruna to the saloon, where he presented the Italian skipper to Père Dulac and Jules de Beauregard, and begged them to assist Bruna in loading the *Padova*. The required assistance was promptly promised, and these preliminaries having been arranged, Northwood, after promising to be back in Quinhon before the *Padova* was loaded, betook himself once more to the chart-room. He found it empty. Mumbles and McScratchie were on the bridge having a violent row with the chief officer of the *Padova*. This he promptly stopped. McScratchie then said that he would sail in the *Adonis* sooner than go on board the

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Padova. There was a British Consul at Saigon, who would see to his rights being enforced, and Saigon was a place where he could make depositions with a view to subsequent legal proceedings at Singapore. Mumbles agreed, as usual, with McScratchie.

"All right," was the sole remark of Northwood, as he quitted the bridge. The Italians thereupon left the *Adonis* to regain their own ship, while Northwood bid an affectionate farewell to Père Dulac and Jules de Beau-regard, and promised once more to return to Quinhon.

And so at last the *Adonis* was steaming out to sea. Her sorely tried owner sniffed the invigorating breeze for a few minutes, then having seen that all his passengers were comfortably bestowed in their different cabins, and that due attention had been given to their wants, went to the saloon, and throwing himself without undressing on a settee, fell at once into the dead sleep of over-fatigue and strain. But once more he had had his way and compelled circumstances to bend before his will.

The voyage of the *Adonis* was exceedingly pleasant. True, the little boat got into some pretty rough water off Cape Padaran, which is notoriously a very stormy sort of place, but by that time the *Adonis* had burned enough coal to lighten by perhaps two or three inches. Still, the *Adonis* walloped about more than enough off Padaran. In due course, the steamer rounded Cape St. James, and peacefully gliding up the broad bosom of the Saigon River, dropped her anchors in the midst of many other steamers.

Northwood parted with his passengers on the most enthusiastic terms. Many were the perfervid thanks and pressing invitations showered upon him. When these pleasant people had taken their departure, he sought out Mumbles and McScratchie, and demanded that they should get over the side of the ship forthwith. He told them frankly that he had had enough of them, and would pay them off at the British Consulate that very day.

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This was another nasty surprise to the conspirators. They thought that they were indispensable in any case, and that by graciously consenting under pressure to navigate the *Adonis* from Quinhon to Saigon they had made their position good.

"But who is going to take our places?" inquired Mumbles.

"No business of yours!" was the reply in tones of thunder. "Pack your traps and get over the side of the ship, both of you, and meet me at the Consulate."

McScratchie once more tried to go on the legal tack, and talked of pains and penalites, intimidation, defamation of character, and various other things, until the exasperated Northwood cut him short with the single word: "*Rot!*" and left him to his meditations.

The scene at the Consulate was not exactly pleasant. Mumbles and McScratchie presented an exorbitant account which Northwood had necessarily to check over and reduce. Finally, he paid them an agreed amount, which they received with mutterings and grumblings. He had to guarantee their hotel expenses and a first-class passage back to Singapore. They were costing the owners of the *Adonis* a pretty penny from first to last.

McScratchie managed to put in a final blow before he left Saigon. M. Fourichon, the director of the Messageries Fluviales, thought of purchasing the *Adonis*, as he wanted a small boat to run river-trips between Saigon and Cape St. James, a service for which she was exactly suited. Northwood asked twenty thousand dollars, a price which would have left him a handsome profit and enabled him to buy a bigger steamer for the Annam coast, a matter of the first importance to him. Fourichon thought the price rather dear, but agreed to pay it if his engineers gave a favourable report about the condition of the ship.

McScratchie, who was not ashamed to prowls about the steamer after his dismissal, got wind of what was under

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consideration. He contrived to meet the French engineers, and told them confidentially that although the *Adonis* looked all right, the plates under her boilers were absolutely rotten. He said that Captain Mumbles and he were leaving the ship because they expected her boilers to go through the bottom next time she got into heavy weather. On this report the much desired sale was broken off. It was not until months afterwards that Northwood learned the reason why from Fourichon.

The presentation of a thumping hotel bill and the payment of two first-class tickets satisfied Northwood that he had at last got rid of Mumbles and McScratchie, who were off to Singapore to pour the tale of their sufferings into the receptive ear of Mr. Richard Piggott, who had returned from England to resume his post as manager.

Northwood was absolutely shocked at the amount of money spent by these two men during the few weeks of their uncontrolled charge of the *Adonis*. It was beyond belief. Consulting with his agents, Delarue and Co., he determined to run the *Adonis* on much more economical lines. Old Delarue suggested an Annamite pilot and a Portuguese engineer as cheap and efficient substitutes for the two dukes who were then travelling first-class to Singapore.

"You will find them do their work very well," said the experienced old Frenchman, "especially if you give them a sound thrashing whenever you think they require it. Nobody will say anything if you give them a good beating from time to time, and you will thus establish your authority beyond a question."

Northwood thought that it would be a real luxury to have a skipper and "chief" whom he could whack to his heart's content on due occasion.

Nam, the new skipper, was a merry little Annamite, with a fair amount of impudence in his composition. It was almost impossible to resist the blarneying ways of this cheery and capable little devil. Alfonso, the engineer,

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was a lank and listless sort of creature, who, nevertheless, knew his job. Nam thought that he was magnificently paid with thirty *piastres de commerce*, or about three pounds, per month, whilst the melancholy Alfonso was passing rich at fifty *piastres*, or five pounds, per month. This was in striking contrast to the *régime* of Mumbles and McScratchie, who drew three hundred dollars per month, and had each a body servant paid for by the owners, and a table allowance of fifty dollars per month, not to mention washing, ship-chandler's bills, etc.

Northwood cancelled his insurance policy by running the *Adonis* with a native pilot, but of that he thought very little. After all, the boat cost the Golconda Company some eight hundred pounds all told, and Mumbles and McScratchie would eat their way through eight hundred pounds in next door to no time. So he determined to "chuck" a very expensive policy and to run the *Adonis* on cheap and reasonable lines.

During a visit to the Saigon customs house, Northwood mentioned that he would be only too happy to take supplies for the customs officers on the Annam coast free of charge by the *Adonis*. He offered the same facilities to the priests of the Missions Étrangères, and thereby gained for himself an easy popularity with both the State and the Church. It is so very simple to do these effective things if a man has the tact to think of them at the right moment.

After a stay of three days in Saigon, during which an enormous amount of small trade was transacted, the *Adonis* set sail for the north.

Northwood found that Nam sailed the *Adonis* on quite different lines to Captain Mumbles. The Annamite took all sorts of risks, and shaved all sorts of corners, but he took the hooker along all right, and saved scores of miles in his navigation.

When the *Adonis* got to Cape Padaran, it was blowing a regular gale. Nam started hunting for easy water,

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and took the ship so close under the towering cliffs of Padaran, that as the little packet swung hither and thither on the crests and hollows of enormous waves, Northwood, who was not a particularly nervous person, thought at times that she would actually hit the beetling cliffs and be cracked like an egg-shell. But Nam knew better. He understood full well the undercurrent which would sweep the *Adonis* out of danger just as the doom of the ship seemed to be inevitable.

Phanrang was reached after quite a fast passage. Northwood was most cordially greeted by everybody, from the Resident downwards. When the Europeans of Phanrang found that they were getting their supplies brought for them free of charge, they were perfectly delighted.

The *Genova* had sailed for Singapore with the cargo purchased by Tonio. Under due pressure Tonio had taken this opportunity of leaving the shores of Annam, and Louis Chassepôt was in command of the situation. The young Frenchman had negotiated another cargo of salt for the next voyage of the *Genova*. He had certainly bought on better terms than Tonio, but his price was still much higher than that of the Quinhon contract arranged by Northwood himself. At all events, the trade was now fairly started. A telegram from Quinhon brought the good news that the *Padova* was loading her cargo somewhat slowly, but that everything was proceeding satisfactorily.

Next day the *Adonis* left for Quinhon. Northwood met with the usual kindly greeting from the Resident and his other friends at Quinhon. Pending the sailing of the *Padova*, de Carfort recommended that the *Adonis* should be taken further north to the little port of Tam Quan, the outlet of a country of great richness.

Northwood was on deck when the *Adonis* arrived at Tam Quan. To his surprise he found Nam anchoring the steamer in an exposed little bay, about a cable's length

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from the shore. The entire scenery consisted of sand. Not a bush or a blade of grass was to be seen anywhere. On a huge sandy ridge was a solitary white-washed building, roofed with palm-thatch. Northwood noted with amazement that stout cables were passed over the roof of this lonely dwelling and made fast to huge blocks of rock, which must have been rolled into position with great effort. He gazed aghast at his uninviting surroundings. Never had he yet beheld such a desolate, hopeless and barren country. Was this de Carfort's land flowing with milk and honey? He suddenly turned round on Nam and accused him of bringing the *Adonis* to some other place than Tam Quan.

Meanwhile little groups of Annamites appeared amongst the sand-hills and gazed astonished at the sudden apparition of the ship. Presently, as if in answer to the shriek of her steam-whistle, the French tricolour floated majestically over the mysterious building on the ridge, and a white man appeared, who stepped into a canoe, and was speedily paddled off to the steamer. He proved to be M. Laroche, the customs officer of the port of Tam Quan. The Frenchman informed Northwood that the *Adonis* was the first steamer which had ever visited the weary strand of Tam Quan, and could scarce believe his eyes when he saw her red ensign floating saucily over her taffrail. It was surely quite illegal for a British steamer to trade with Tam Quan, if such, indeed, was the object of her visit.

A paper signed by the Resident of Quinhon set all difficulties at rest, and Laroche, decent and kindly man that he proved to be, insisted that Northwood should accept his invitation to a *déjeuner à la fourchette*. Madame Laroche would be delighted to receive so distinguished a visitor. Northwood accepted with pleasure the hospitality so graciously offered and went ashore with his host. By this time the sandy shores of Tam Quan were simply swarming with excited Annamites, who fairly mobbed

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Laroche and his guest. Fortunately they had not far to go and were soon in the comparative coolness afforded by the interior of the isolated house. Madame Laroche, a singularly pretty and attractive young woman, received Northwood most charmingly.

Presently a simple and well-cooked repast was served, but it was evident that the little household was short of supplies from the outer world. Of fish, flesh and fowl there was an abundance, but poor Madame Laroche had to apologize because there was no bread ; they had been out of flour for some weeks, and had been getting along as best they could on cakes made out of ground rice. They had no oil or vinegar for salads, and, worst of all, no coffee ! Their supplies reached them at long and uncertain intervals by a junk. They got letters more frequently by Annamite messengers, who found their way through the forests and over the deserts, with their mail sewn up in oilcloth. The Laroches had a guard of six Annamite soldiers, who also served as boatmen and servants. The coast was subject to tremendous storms, and the house on the ridge being terribly exposed to the forces of the tempest, had literally to be moored to its position by huge cables secured in the manner already described. It was a lonely life, but the Laroches were happy and liked the country. Madame Laroche had somehow imparted a mysterious air of elegance and refinement to the whitewashed barn in which she lived. She was one of those French wives of whom the foreigner understands nothing as a rule, but there are many like her.

Tiffin being over, Laroche said : " When it gets a little cooler we will mount our ponies and have a look at the beauties of Tam Quan ; indeed, you may have a glimpse of them now from our back verandah ! "

So saying, he led the way out of the dining-room to the verandah, where a couple of enormous tame peacocks were pacing the tiled floor with great dignity. Rapidly rolling up a bamboo screen which kept the place dark and

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cool, Laroche bade his visitor look. Northwood started back as he beheld a vision which made him doubt his senses. Beyond a sandy waste, tufted hither and thither with rank herbage, he saw groves of palm-trees, tender green fields of sugar-cane, the sparkling waters of running streams, and soft, rolling hills clad in verdure melting away in the distance.

"Why! what is this?" he cried in amaze.

Madame Laroche laughed merrily as she said: "Never judge by appearances. Our shores are desolate wastes, but the country beyond is extremely rich and beautiful!"

Northwood now began to understand de Carfort's description of Tam Quan.

Mounting their ponies, the trio started at a swift amble on their journey inland. At the first village they perceived a black-robed priest striding rapidly to meet them.

"That is Père Antoine, who will be delighted to make your acquaintance!" observed Laroche.

The worthy priest greeted his visitors with enthusiasm and showed them round his village with a pride which he made little effort to conceal. It was the cleanest and most prosperous village Northwood had yet seen in Annam. The inhabitants looked sleek and contented. "They are all Christians!" explained Père Antoine exultantly.

The priest took his friends into a long shed where, to Northwood's surprise, he found numbers of Annamite women manufacturing a very beautiful silk *crêpe* in handsome designs. Northwood immediately bought several pieces of it to take away with him. The cultivation and manufacture of silk were unknown in the country until the priests introduced an industry which had now become flourishing and prosperous.

"If you will send the *Adonis* to Saigon," said Laroche to Northwood, "you will find as much cargo here as will fill the steamer quite easily at a very high freight, and you will get a number of passengers also."

Already the Annamites were jostling each other to offer

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Northwood quantities of silk, sugar, betel-nuts, hides, and all sorts of produce, which they were eager to get to Saigon by steamer, and the shippers were most anxious to take advantage of this unequalled opportunity to go as passengers together with their goods. It was evident that there was much more cargo offering at Tam Quan than the *Adonis* could possibly load. As Laroche and Père Antoine had kindly offered to act as agents for the ship, Northwood gave them an idea of what she could carry, and was thankful enough to leave everything in their hands. He insisted that his friends should dine on board the *Adonis* that evening, and with some little difficulty Père Antoine was persuaded to mount his pony and accompany the little troop on their way back to the coast.

Northwood had privily sent Lapis back to the ship, before he left for his ride, with orders to bring certain stores with him. When Madame returned to her home, she happened to look into the back verandah, and there to her surprise she found, neatly piled up in one corner of it, a considerable supply of flour, coffee, a few dozens of claret, besides such much-needed trifles as olive oil and vinegar. She nearly wept with joy over a dozen tins of sardines. She had quite forgotten what sardines were like. While Madame made no effort to conceal her delight, Laroche gravely insisted on offering payment for these much-needed supplies. But Northwood begged of him to send off some water and fresh provisions to the *Adonis* and promised to square accounts afterwards.

That evening's dinner on board was a delightful success. Laroche gave way to a long repressed hilarity and proved to be a very fountain of wit and humour. Nor was Père Antoine much behind him in contributing to the gaiety of the party, notwithstanding the habitual severity and restraint of his manner. The priest proved himself to be a consummate scholar, and a man of the world also. Northwood found himself wondering who Père Antoine might really be. Madame Laroche enjoyed everything

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from the soup to the conversation, and clapped her little hands ecstatically when Lapis filled the champagne glasses—poor little soul! it was such a weary long time since she had even heard of champagne! Père Antoine looked askance at the bubbling wine, and was with much difficulty persuaded to take just one glass of it. Finally, the little party broke up, all too soon as it seemed to Northwood, and his delightful guests took their departure.

The next day Northwood was busy loading the *Adonis* at perfectly fabulous rates. By the afternoon the little steamer was deep loaded to an extent which would have driven Captain Mumbles and Mr. McScratchie stark mad, but which made no earthly difference to the philosophical and fatalist Nam. The decks, too, were swarming with passengers.

Laroche had supplied the *Adonis* with an abundance of sweet water, live stock, vegetables and all sorts of good things. With the poultry, the excellent Frenchman had sent on board a couple of young peacocks, which Northwood noted with the eye of a connoisseur, and made up his mind to have them truffled and roasted at an early opportunity. There are few things nicer to eat than a truffled peacock, provided the bird is young and well roasted.

He prevailed on Monsieur and Madame Laroche to come on board the *Adonis* just a little before her departure, to have some tea and biscuits. This modest refreshment had been barely served, when suddenly the clear sky grew black, and it seemed to the astonished Northwood as if the entire China Sea was about to empty itself on the doomed shores of Tam Quan. Laroche was the first to sound the alarm.

"You must get out of this at once, you are much too close in shore!" he shouted, as the squall struck the *Adonis*. Hurrying his wife into his boat, he bid a hasty farewell to Northwood. Fortunately they had but a very short distance to go, and Laroche and his Annamites

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handled their craft very skilfully, but it upset on the beach nevertheless. Northwood saw Madame Laroche, for the last time, being dragged through a blinding blur of spray and sand into safety. The wind raged with a wild fury which explained why Laroche lashed his house down with cables.

Meanwhile, the *Adonis* was in serious danger of being flung upon the beach amidst the boiling surges and the rolling waves, lashed by the storm into a seething hell. If anything went wrong now, it was all up with the ship, and most of those on board.

Northwood very wisely left everything to Nam, who never lost his head for an instant, and brought the *Adonis* out of peril like a real Annamite gamecock. For some anxious moments it seemed as if nothing could save the ship, but suddenly she began to make a little headway, and the dexterous Nam with a slight movement of the tiny wheel which controlled the steamer's steering-gear took her out into comparative safety. The weather moderated with amazing rapidity as soon as the *Adonis* got away from the coast, and the rest of the passage to Quinhon was quite uneventful.

Finding the *Padova* at Quinhon, Northwood determined to send the *Adonis* to Saigon direct, without delay, while he himself ran down the coast on board the *Padova*.

Until she should start he was made very comfortable on shore at the house of his friend Jules, and he spent a few very happy days at Quinhon. The *Padova* was loaded much quicker this voyage, and soon set out for Phanrang, from which place she was to proceed straight to Singapore.

This was Northwood's first experience of travelling by a Tambourini liner and it was rather a trying one, partly owing to the variety and abundance of insect life on board and partly owing to other causes.

For one thing, the volatile Tonio was now on board the *Padova* as chief officer, and if Tonio was not much good on shore, what was he worth at sea ?

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The day the *Padova* left Quinhon Northwood spent a very restless night, being much disturbed by flying cockroaches amongst other abominations. One of these hideous cockroaches managed to fly straight into his ear, as he was trying to get to sleep. He instinctively tried to pull out the insect, with the result that it broke in half, and he had to dig out a nauseating pulp from his ear with a penknife, which somehow cut a vein, and deluged his face with blood. He realized once more that pioneering has its drawbacks!

With the first ray of dawn, he slipped out of his bunk and went on deck. Here, to his vast astonishment, he found not a soul on deck and instead of running along the coast of Annam, the *Padova* was slowly bumping over a softly rolling sea, with the coast of Annam right astern of her. Apparently she would fetch Manila on her present course, whereas he wanted to get to Phanrang. He raced round the empty decks, wondering what had become of the captain and the crew. Finally, it occurred to him to hunt up Captain Bruna, whom he found fast asleep in his cabin, regardless of sundry cockroaches, flying and otherwise, which were busily engaged in biting off the ends of his hair and moustaches. Northwood now understood why Bruna looked so particularly ragged in certain minor details.

The captain went on deck with Northwood, and explained to him that as Tonio invariably went to sleep on his watch, he had thought it best to slow down the speed of the *Padova* to some three or four knots, and paddle her gently out to sea, where the brave boat was not likely to hit anything. Poor Captain Bruna pleaded that he must necessarily get a little sleep occasionally.

After this the *Padova* was put on her course for Phanrang at full speed, while Northwood had Tonio dragged out of his bunk, and kept the fat Italian busy on all sorts of jobs until he nearly fainted.

The *Padova* arrived off Phanrang a few hours late as a

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consequence of Bruna's prudent navigation and Tonio's partiality for a good night's rest. A boat was waiting to take Northwood on shore and the steamer steered her course for Singapore once he was over her side.

Northwood found that Louis Chassepôt had built for himself a nice large hut of planks, bamboo and palm-thatch near the Residency, which was quite comfortable, and had the merit of costing next door to nothing. In this primitive structure Northwood took up his head quarters for the time being. The couple kept no cook as they were always welcome to take their meals at the Residency or with some of the officials, and such hospitalities were repaid on board the *Adonis* whenever Northwood's flagship happened to be in port.

Northwood and his French colleague now started on various journeys inland in order to tap the trade of the country. Sometimes they went together, but more frequently Northwood went alone on these expeditions, as one of them would stay in Phanrang while the other went prospecting.

No one should travel in Annam unless he is robust and prepared to accept all sorts of hardships cheerfully. A man must be able to ride in this strange country, and if he can handle a boat so much the better, while he should certainly know how to swim, as he may have to do so when he least expects it. There is endless variety in a ride across country. Sometimes the way will be over sandy wastes or regions of rocks, at others, through cultivated fields, at others, again, through dense forests or over a mountain range. Streams and rivers have continually to be crossed. When the water is shallow enough to swim a horse across, it means nothing more than a disagreeable wetting, but if the streams are rapid, or if a river has to be crossed, both man and horse have to be got into a boat and ferried over to the other side. This same business of getting a horse into a boat is often a very trying one, for while some horses will step on board

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as nicely as possible, others will kick and jib, and so make the job most difficult and unsafe. The Annamite ferry-boats are crazy affairs made of woven bamboos, covered over with some sort of resin, which is supposed to keep them watertight; but they nearly always leak most terribly.

One animal which Northwood had cajoled into a boat with great difficulty, jumped overboard in midstream. The horse was absolutely indispensable, so he had to hang on to him like grim death, while boat and beast went swirling down a rapid current. The boat was filling fast, but Northwood managed to make the shore just in time a long way from the point where he had intended to land. Just a few days before this happened an unfortunate priest was dragged into the river by his horse and drowned.

During one of his expeditions Louis Chassepôt rode right into a herd of wild elephants. His horse, quivering with fear, refused to stir a leg, and Louis himself did nothing in particular, probably the wisest course of action in the circumstances, for the elephants, not liking the look of things, went crashing into the jungle and disappeared.

Northwood rode out one fine morning with a French officer to pay a visit to the *phu*, or native prefect, of a neighbouring town. They reached their destination after a long ride over a very rough and mountainous country. The Annamite dignitary regaled them in a most unexpected way by opening two bottles of stout which he happened to possess. The stout tasted delicious, but to Northwood's amazement, the Frenchman accepted further refreshment from the hospitable *phu* in the shape of several pipes of opium which they smoked together.

Northwood had great difficulty in getting his friend into the saddle again, and the position was one of some anxiety. They had a long way to go over a difficult mountain ridge, and it was getting late. They finally

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started, but by the time they got amongst the mountains, a storm broke upon them with tremendous violence. The rain beat on them with pitiless fury, while the thunder crashed amidst the heights, and the lightning flashes glared continually overhead. The horses picked their slippery way over the rocky ground streaming with water, until they reached their highest point and began the descent on the other side. The light was failing, great wreaths of mist curled round the horsemen, and amidst the drenching torrent and the booming of the storm their ride down a rough, rock-strewn mountain side became a dismal and difficult business.

The Frenchman's spirits were rising in a mad way the whole time, however. He shouted and laughed continually, and suddenly giving a frantic yell, rammed his spurs into his horse and went charging down that rocky slope at a gallop! Northwood could not stand the idea of being lost on that mountain side on such a night, and in order to keep his queer friend in sight he had to do that gallop himself. How it was that they were not rolled over a dozen times it is impossible to say, but the horses somehow kept their footing as they flew along. Getting near the end of the slope, Northwood saw before them a swollen, muddy torrent churning furiously amongst its rocks. Giving a joyous howl, the Frenchman rode slap into the water with a splash and a smother. At first Northwood thought that he had been washed away, but he got through all right and our hero followed him.

This final exploit, however, effectually damped the Frenchman's exuberant spirits and he was now able to talk sense again. The horses were in such a pitiable state that the idea of returning to Phanrang that night had to be abandoned, and with much difficulty the two found their way to an Annamite village. They slept that night on the bare boards of a little temple, and were in the saddle again at daybreak. Stout and opium do *not* mix well.

In Annam, they have an odd and inconvenient system

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of establishing the *poste*, or the military headquarters and telegraph office, at a distance of several miles from the nearest town. Thus, in the case of Phanrang, the *poste* is at Kin-dinh, fourteen miles away from the town and harbour. Every time that Northwood wanted to exchange telegrams with his friends he had to put in a ride of twenty-eight miles over a sandy desert.

One day, Père Dulac, who was on a visit to Phanrang, arranged to go to Kin-dinh with Northwood and Louis Chassepôt, who also had business there. After an early breakfast at the Custom House, it was discovered that, owing to some careless mistake, there was only one horse available for the three men, although, as a rule, it is easy enough to get a mount. None of the trio would consent to ride while his comrades walked, so the horse was left behind—a silly proceeding, which very nearly cost the lives of the whole party. Meanwhile, the sun was rising in the heavens, and it was already uncomfortably hot when they started. They got on pretty well for the first five or six miles on their way over a vast, dead-flat expanse of sand. Here and there were enormous piles of rocks in huge confused masses, but nothing else—a desolate and dreary landscape.

Presently the little expedition got amongst an interminable series of glowing ridges of sand which rose high on every side of them. The sun was now right overhead; the heat and glare got to be simply terrible, whilst the effort of painfully shuffling through the burning sand began to tell severely on the three Europeans. By the time they emerged from the sand-hills they were exhausted, breathless and parched with thirst. Before them stretched another limitless expanse of sheer sand, simply blazing with the mid-day heat of the scorching sun. They had still several miles of this terrible country to get over, and were scarcely capable of moving another step. The position was getting serious. The burly Father Dulac staggered as he shuffled along; there was a peculiar bluish

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tinge in his face which boded no good. He insisted on leaving the beaten track, half-hidden in the sand, for an imaginary sheet of water and some equally imaginary palm-trees which he saw close at hand. Suddenly the priest reeled and fell senseless on the sand. Northwood's temples were hammering ominously, and red spots danced before his eyes; his lips were cracked. Louis and Northwood consulted each other as to the situation. It was at once decided that the Frenchman, who was of a spare and wiry build, should make an attempt to reach the *poste* and bring assistance, while Northwood stood by Father Dulac. The Englishman had a bad time of it as he lay on the sand by the unconscious priest—the whole of the horrid scene swam before his aching eyes; he suffered from acute pains in his head, and agonies of thirst. Finally, he was aroused from a state of semi-consciousness by shouts in the distance and in a dazed sort of way believed he saw a party of horsemen coming in his direction. It was Louis Chassepôt arriving from Kin-dinh with assistance. Père Dulac was revived with the water which the rescuers had brought with them, and the whole party were now able to mount and ride to Kin-dinh. But it was a near thing. Had Chassepôt mistaken his road, it would have been all up with him as well as with Northwood and Père Dulac. The two Frenchmen spent the rest of the day swilling wine and water continuously, but by the advice of the Commandant, Northwood drank some absinthe and water, which quenched his burning thirst at once. It is terrible stuff to drink habitually, but absinthe certainly served a good purpose on this occasion.

Northwood had some little respite from his life of privation and peril during the occasional trips he made on board of the *Adonis* between Saigon and Quinhon. In fine weather he found these cruises along the coast of Annam to be both restful and delightful. When the sea was smooth and crystal-clear the vast masses of Cape Padaran were no longer a terror and made a most

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imposing picture. There is a certain sense of isolation in travelling about Annam. At sea Northwood had the whole coast to himself. He very rarely met any other steamer except one of his chartered boats, and was managing the only European mercantile enterprise in existence over a coast-line extending for more than six hundred miles.

The original route attempted by him was from Saigon *viâ* Phan-tiet, Phanry, Phanrang and Honkoi to Quinhon, but alas! the *Adonis* proved to be much too small and too slow for an overflowing trade, and all idea of keeping up a regular service between these ports had to be abandoned. So the little packet was kept running where she would pay best, and to suit the general scheme of the trade.

The rainy monsoon was near at hand, when all Annam would be drenched with water and more or less flooded. During this period the salt trade necessarily comes to a complete stop, and communications between many points are difficult and dangerous, if not impracticable. As Northwood was not at all satisfied with the management of the Annam trade on the other side, he determined to leave Chassepôt in charge at Phanrang, while he re-organized the business at the Singapore base.

While there is little or no actual trading to be done during the wet monsoon, it is a rare time for a man with money at his disposal to sow the seeds for a golden harvest to be reaped with the commencement of the fine weather. The impoverished and thriftless Annamite is always in a bad way during his winter season, and it is the only time when a fair bargain can be struck with the shifty and unconscionable creature. Northwood deposited some thousands of dollars at the Customs, which were held at the disposal of Chassepôt for the express purpose of making advances against salt contracts at a time when their necessities would make the Annamite dealers eager to do business for forward delivery in exchange for ready cash,

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and as long as contracts were signed and witnessed at the Residency they were quite safe.

Northwood gave Louis Chassepôt careful and repeated instructions as to the investment of the money left at his command, a very simple matter, after all. The Frenchman somehow did not seem to admire the prospect of being shut up in Annam during the wet monsoon, and even suggested that Northwood should remain while he went to Singapore to visit his father and his other friends. Had Northwood been a wise man, he would have seen that Chassepôt was getting into one of his depressed and sulky moods and would have let him go to Singapore. But time was precious, and it seemed absurd to sacrifice important business interests to the convenience of a man who had, after all, been at work in Annam for a few brief months only. So Northwood, having given Louis his instructions in writing, together with much good advice, sailed in the *Adonis* for Saigon.

Here he gave orders that the *Adonis* was to be laid up in the river, and all hands paid off except Nam and Alfonso, who were to be responsible for keeping the little boat and her engines in good order. The *Genova* and *Padova* were diverted to other trades for the time being, thus relegating the Annam coast to its former state of melancholy isolation.

Northwood arrived at Singapore in due course, and set to work to put things into shape, and then made a flying trip to Penang in order to push the trade in that direction, a measure which afterwards met with considerable success.

All this was but the business of some three hard-working weeks, and Northwood, finding himself free for other labours, flung himself with relentless energy into the Russian trade. In this he made truly remarkable progress in a short time, with very notable results to himself. Indeed, this proved to be the turning-point of his future career.

Little did Northwood dream, however, as he corresponded incessantly with St. Petersburg and rapidly

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developed a most interesting commerce between the Straits and the Black Sea, that he was paving the way for a voyage to Russia within the next few months, and that it would ultimately be his destiny to spend many a long year within the borders of the vast empire of the Tsar.

With the approach of the change in the monsoon, Northwood handed over the Russian interests, now placed upon an entirely new footing, to the care of his colleagues, and made active preparations for the next campaign in Annam.

He ordered the *Genova* to Phanrang and the *Padova* to Quinhon. He himself went to Phanrang in the *Continental*, a fine modern cargo boat, which loaded more than the two Tambourini vessels put together, and which could be trusted to keep her time. The *Continental*, which was chartered on exceedingly favourable terms, flew the Dutch flag by way of a change. The *Adonis* was ordered to meet Northwood at Phanrang, and operations began in earnest.

Northwood found, as he had feared, that Louis Chassepôt, who seemed to have been hibernating during the winter of his discontent, had signally failed to avail himself of his opportunities. True, he had bought enough salt to load the *Continental* and the *Genova* at Phanrang, and the *Padova* at Quinhon, but the bulk of the specie entrusted to him still lay untouched at the Custom House, whereas every single dollar of it should have been invested. It was a bitter disappointment. Northwood set to work to make the best of a bad job, but the golden opportunity of that year had been lost through the indecision and indifference of Chassepôt.

Having set the trade in motion along the coast after a flying visit to Honkoi, Niatrang and Quinhon, Northwood sailed in the *Adonis* to Saigon to settle important matters there. While he was busily engaged in various negotiations, he received a polite note from Fourichon, the manager of the Messageries Fluviales, requesting the

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pleasure of an interview, which naturally took place almost immediately.

That short interview changed the course of events entirely, and as it happened, was the immediate cause of Northwood's departure from French Indo-China, and the collapse of the trade to which he had devoted so much energy.

Fourichon put it with admirable directness to Northwood that his highly irregular proceedings on the Annam coast had been watched with the closest interest, and had been minutely reported to Saigon by the Residents and customs officials, after an express order from the Governor-General. Northwood learned, to his vast surprise, that his enterprise had not only been tolerated, but encouraged, in order to see what would be the result of the venture, but that the Governor-General had never for one moment intended that it should go beyond a certain limit, which had now been reached. It was absurd to suppose that Northwood could be allowed to run four steamers about the Annam coast under the British, Italian and Dutch flags, and conduct a large trade at various ports, ranging from Saigon to Quinhon, without so much as requesting the permission of the French Government or paying it one centime in taxes. Northwood had not troubled to register any firm or company in Indo-China, and his position was illegal to such a degree as to make him liable to heavy penalties, if the French authorities chose to set the machinery of the law in motion. Therefore, the British venture in Annam must be stopped at the earliest possible moment, or certain very unpleasant things would inevitably take place.

Fourichon paused for a moment to study the young Englishman's face. Northwood stood the ordeal well, but he was gifted with features too expressive to entirely hide his feelings at the moment, which were those of utter dismay. Had he found himself hurtling down the depths of the bottomless pit, he could hardly have been more

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surprised and appalled than when he heard Fourichon's singularly lucid exposition of affairs.

The Frenchman, with a genial smile, proceeded to say that Northwood's operations were generally recognized as being of great benefit to Annam and that they had been conducted with an energy and ability which created a favourable opinion in many quarters. According to Fourichon, he had discovered many new features in Annam, and shown the way to commercial possibilities of the highest order. Therefore the Frenchman made a certain proposal to Northwood as the representative of a wealthy British company. It was to the effect that a new Franco-British company should be started under the French flag to work the Annam trade on extensive and sound lines. Fourichon offered to find half the capital and manage the new company in Saigon. He proposed that Northwood should manage in Annam, while the Golconda Company should control all business in Singapore and Penang. The terms were perfectly fair, and to a certain extent flattering as regards Northwood himself. But Fourichon wanted new steamers built especially for the trade; he proposed building wharves and warehouses also—excellent, profitable and even indispensable things in their way, but requiring a formidable capital. Northwood could but reply that he must refer a matter of such importance to London.

"Exactly so!" urged Fourichon. "Go to London, *viâ* Paris. See the chairman of our company on your way to London, and the whole thing is settled! There is any amount of money in the affair!"

On one point Fourichon insisted: the thing must be done rapidly. He wanted Northwood to proceed to Paris and London at once, and to be back in Saigon by the end of September that same year, so that he could take charge in Annam before the wet monsoon commenced. Fourichon had noted Louis Chassépôt's failure, and did not want it repeated.

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In the circumstances, however, it seemed rather fortunate that Chassepôt had been inactive, because it was Northwood's first task to close all operations on the Annam coast prior to his departure for Europe.

Without loss of time Northwood sailed in the *Adonis* for his last cruise along the coast.

The weather was very fine, and now that Northwood was leaving Annam, he found that he had grown very fond of the country. He had got to love that desolate and barren coast, with its great expanses of rock and sand, interrupted by masses of a dense, dull-coloured jungle; a wild and weary land quivering under a blistering heat. Full well did he realize that the arid and rocky coast before him was but a veil which hid the fertile and productive country behind it—a land teeming with resources and potential wealth. He thought of the seas simply swarming with fish; of the barren, sandy wastes so admirably suited for the manufacture of salt; of the jungles alive with game; of the splendid soil capable of growing everything from rice and coffee to silk in perfection, and of its vast mineral wealth, as yet untouched.

Surely he would come back to this land of marvels. Yet he doubted it. He was not his own master, for without an abundant capital at his back his energy and experience went for nothing. Would London give him the capital necessary to open up a French colony? He began to doubt it, and his heart grew sore at the thought of quitting Annam for ever.

Arriving at Phanrang, Northwood astonished Louis Chassepôt by ordering him to settle up all accounts, break up his establishment, and proceed to Singapore without delay. The Resident and those in his confidence had long foreseen the event which was now taking place, but they cheered both Northwood and themselves with the idea that our hero would soon be back in Annam developing a mightier enterprise under the French flag, with the full support and encouragement of the Governor-General.

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At Niatrang, Northwood was detained settling up various matters of some importance. The weather was grilling hot, and when the Resident suggested having dinner that evening up in the *mirador* of the little fort, everybody hailed the idea with pleasure. A *mirador* is a kind of watch-tower, built up of squares of timber to a very considerable height. That of Niatrang was a very fine structure of its kind, boasting of no less than four distinct floors, connected by ladders. The *mirador* not only commanded the whole country, but its floors afforded a lodgment for riflemen, from which they could cut up any hostile body of natives with but little risk to themselves.

Dinner was served that evening on the second floor of the *mirador*, from which there was a perfectly magnificent view of the sea and the rocky bay on one side and the dense forests on the other. The saucy white *Adonis*, anchored in the middle of the bay, looked remarkably pretty, with an impudent red ensign hanging over her taffrail. A soft, cool breeze refreshed the Resident and his guests, who were amply compensated thereby for their efforts in climbing the ladders of the *mirador*.

The dinner was excellent and the conversation animated and agreeable. The chief subject of discussion was the influence of the priests in Annam. The Collector of Customs happened to be an open enemy of the Church, but he expressed himself with some moderation on this evening. He accused the priests of usurping a political power in Annam.

"Side by side with the Government, but altogether independent of it," he said, "the Church exercises a rule of its own, an *imperium in imperio*, which is the despair of every French official."

The captain commanding the Annamite *linhs* backed up his colleague. He said he could not so much as arrest a pirate or a horse-stealer unless the missionaries chose that he should do so. He insisted that the missionaries always

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try to segregate their converts, and get them to live with their wives and children in Christian villages or communities in which the Church, not the Government, represents the supreme authority. If an Annamite committed a crime, he promptly became a convert, and was sheltered in a Christian community, where he was quite safe from capture by the forces of the Government, which he defied with impunity.

"Yes!" exclaimed the Captain. "That is how criminals escape justice and keep the whole country in a state of turmoil. *I will not say that all the Christians are robbers, but I affirm that all the robbers are Christians!*"

Northwood remembered having discussed this very question with Père Dulac, when the worthy priest was busy saving a notorious scoundrel from the gallows, which he so richly deserved, not for the first time in his life. In response to the young Englishman's inquiry as to the motive of hiding such a hardened criminal from justice, Père Dulac replied: "I know quite as well as you do that this fellow is a sinister ruffian, and I appreciate his value as a 'convert' at its real worth I can assure you, but the fellow has wives and children. May we not hope to make good Christians and good men and women of these poor children? Can you answer me that question in the negative?"

"The Residents and their officials say that we priests of the Foreign Missions meddle too much with the government of the country, but have we not a word to say in the matter? To whom does France owe the possession of Annam, if not to the Church?"

"Was it not the famous Bishop of Adran, Monseigneur Pigneau de Bechaide, who brought a little Annamite prince to the Court of Louis XVI. and had the Treaty of 1787 signed at Versailles? Who but this bishop acquired an extraordinary influence over the mind of the Emperor Gia-long, and firmly established the influence of France in Annam?"

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"There have been terrible events in France since that distant day: the French Revolution, the Napoleonic wars, the German invasion, followed by the siege of Paris and the Commune, disasters sufficient to have annihilated the colonial ambitions of any nation. But there has been a continuity of purpose in the policy of the Church to establish France as a great power in the Far East which has survived every calamity and has achieved its ends.

"Just as in 1787 the Bishop of Adran influenced Louis XVI. in the matter of the Treaty signed with the Annamite prince at Versailles, so did the Abbé Huc, in 1857, following up the policy of his illustrious predecessor, make an appeal to Napoleon III. to uphold the cause of the persecuted Church in Annam, and with the forgotten Versailles Treaty as his principal support, brought about the expedition under the command of Admiral Rigault de Genouilly, which captured Saigon in 1859. The Republicans of to-day may not like to admit that France owes the possession of Indo-China and Annam solely and entirely owing to the efforts of the Church, but that does not in any way alter the facts of the case!"

Northwood put the claims of Père Dulac before his friends without prejudice.

The gallant captain who had marched many a league and fought many a fight in Annam, a particularly trying and dangerous phase of warfare, lit another cigarette, and with a sort of hoarse growl admitted that many a time has a missionary marched at the head of a French column, invading the country, and that the whole system of Missions acted as an admirable intelligence department, which was of great value from a military point of view. He was, nevertheless, of opinion that Annam being now fairly well in hand, and all fighting on a large scale a thing of the past, it was to be hoped that it was time to curb priestly ambitions, and compel the missionaries to respect the laws of the French Republic.

The Resident remarked that the question was one of

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great complexity. Undoubtedly Church and State do not harmonize within the broad expanse of Indo-China. The Missions represent a great power in the land, seeking to work independently of the Government itself, and for its own ends. In any Annamite town or village will be found the buildings of the Missions Étrangères, and the Fathers will be seen working with untiring zeal to improve the condition of the natives and to Christianize them. It is a common thing to see a priest in the swampy paddy-fields, looking like some gigantic crow, seeing that they are being ploughed to a proper depth or superintending the construction of a canal. This work will not, however, prevent him from teaching a class of little Annamites, or from attending to his purely religious duties. These missionaries lead a very hard life: the simplest food, the humblest shelter, and the coarse robe of the priest, represent the sum total of their share of this world's gifts. They thoroughly understand the native language, and have an intimate knowledge of the country. It is not surprising, therefore, if they have a great influence over Annamites of every class. Whether the priests wield that influence wisely is quite another matter. The black side of *all* missionary enterprise is the terrible loss of life which it never fails to bring about at some time or another. There have been repeated and bloody persecutions of the Annamite Christians ever since the days of the Emperor Gia-long, and so late as 1883 the mandarins organized a most hideous and barbarous butchery, in the course of which thousands and thousands of converts perished, not even women and children being spared.

Thus the Resident, who was too diplomatic to say exactly what he really thought of the Fathers of the Foreign Missions.

During the pause which ensued, Northwood could not help thinking for a brief moment of certain sleek, well-fed, married missionaries of other creeds, who know nought of canals, paddy-planting and privations, but who are

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past masters in the art of maintaining themselves and their families in comfort, and who have a truly great conception of their duty to themselves.

The Collector was not to be so easily satisfied on the subject of this friendly debate as his colleagues. "So the missionaries marched at the head of our invading columns, did they? *They* led the way to the conquest of Annam, and were now civilizing a degraded race! Was this policy adopted from the days of the Bishop of Adran up to the present moment for the benefit of France? Not for one fleeting second. *Ces messieurs* served Rome and not Paris. If it was at all practicable to do so, they would hoist the Papal flag, with its triple crown and crossed keys, over Indo-China to-morrow." The Collector had had enough of these gentlemen. They had served their purpose, and as they were now amusing themselves by organizing a government of their own much more powerful and effective than that of the Republic, he demanded that every white missionary without exception should be expelled from Indo-China.

With this expression of the extremist view the discussion closed, and the conversation turned on the merits and demerits of the Annamites themselves.

When it is remembered that the Annamites of to-day are the outcome of centuries of oppression and misrule, and that for hundreds of years their mandarins have subjected them to every form of cruelty which human wickedness has been able to devise, it can hardly be a matter of surprise that they have degenerated into a servile and abject race.

Not much good was said about the aborigines that evening. True, the Captain remarked that under good leadership the Annamites fight very well indeed, while the Resident spoke of the innate ability of these people; but the Collector expressed the prevailing opinion that the natives of the country are a wholly unsatisfactory race, *au physique comme au moral*, a small, weedy and scaly

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people, of filthy habits, lazy and dishonest, and prone to drinking, opium-smoking, gambling, and other vices which need not be specifically named, to a degree which seems almost incredible to the European. Doubtless the Collector expressed a general idea of the Annamite in a crude and exaggerated form. Northwood expressed himself to the effect that the French conquest of Indo-China is of incalculable benefit to the victims of an atrocious tyranny now happily a thing of the past, and that the people and country alike will progress and prosper and add to the wealth and strength of France.

At last the Resident said that he invited everybody to the Residency to drink a parting glass with their friend, Mr. Northwood.

The moon had risen and the men on the platform of the *mirador* could not but gaze with admiration on the radiant scene which surrounded them on every side. Very powerful, however, was the counter-attraction of the Resident's champagne, and they were soon slipping down the ladders of the *mirador*.

The night finished amidst much cordiality, and at daylight Northwood sailed for Quinhon and from thence to Saigon.

Here he finished up with Delarue and Co. and sold the *Adonis* to a Frenchman for something more than he had originally paid for the vessel. Poor Nam howled dismally on getting the sack, in spite of a good gratuity, and a tear trickled down the greasy cheek of the silent Alfonso as he took his leave of Northwood. These poor fellows had got to like their master, and were quite heartbroken at having to leave his service. They were creatures of a different and inferior breed to Mumbles and McScratchie, but they were much pleasanter men with whom to sail.

Fourichon congratulated Northwood on having closed his Annam venture so promptly, and urged him to hasten to Paris and London and to return without the loss of a day to Saigon.

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On arriving at Singapore, our hero found that there was no objection whatever to his leaving for Europe as soon as he wished. Richard Piggott, indeed, was only too eager to get rid of him. But as Northwood had given a new impetus and a new direction to the Russian trade, it was considered imperative that he should travel through Russia before going to either France or England.

This looked like a finishing blow to the Annam venture. Russia was a long way out of his route, and time was precious. As events proved, Northwood was not destined to see Annam again. Apart from all considerations, the political situation happened to be exceedingly strained at the time, and British capitalists did not see their way to investing large sums of money in a distant colony under the French flag.

CHAPTER XXXIII

RUSSIA

NORTHWOOD experienced yet another sharp contrast in his life's history when he found himself on board the Russian volunteer steamer *Orel* (i.e., the *Eagle*) on his way from Singapore to Odessa.

The *Orel*, a magnificent ship, carried a battalion of infantry from Vladivostok to Odessa; and Northwood, being the only foreigner on board, found his position both peculiar and interesting. The Russians treated him with their usual kindliness and hospitality, so that he was soon happy and at home amongst them.

It was an entirely new world to our wandering Briton, and he was never wearied of studying his Russian friends.

The captain and officers of the *Orel* were all old acquaintances, but he learned to know them and appreciate them much better during a voyage of twenty-five days in their company. He had also the good fortune to take the fancy of Lieutenant-Colonel Dashkoff, in command of the battalion.

The colonel was an unusually fine type of the Russian officer—intelligent, cool-headed and entirely given up to his work. A brave man, who had seen much active service, Dashkoff had risen owing to his own merit, having neither money nor "protection" behind him. He knew every man in his battalion, over twelve hundred strong, by the whole string of his family names, and watched over them with a truly paternal solicitude. He could, of course, do exactly as he pleased with them. He had persuaded his lambs that it would be much better for them

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if they substituted tea for their ordinary rations of spirits during the long voyage from Vladivostok to Odessa, and they drank tea accordingly. True, they were each to get a special allowance of one copeck (say, a farthing) per diem at the end of the voyage as a reward for their virtue, and with this arrangement they were quite content.

The captains and lieutenants of the battalion spent most of their time in playing cards and lounging about the ship, drinking tea at all hours of the day and night. They were perfectly satisfied that the colonel should look after the battalion, which was no affair of theirs. Socially these officers were very agreeable and amusing.

The soldiers were fine, hearty, strapping fellows, the sort of men who looked as if they could go anywhere and do anything if they were properly led. They were so good-natured and so jolly that it was impossible not to like them. A quieter and better disciplined lot it would be hard to find. It was very pleasant on a fine evening to listen to these rough soldiers singing their songs, which they did with great effect and much sweetness of melody. Music seems to be instinctive in the Russian.

There were two chaplains on board, who spent much of their time in drinking spirits with unexampled fervour. These reverend gentlemen thought nothing of emptying a whole tumbler of vodka at a draught. Their noses were red and their hands shaky, but they enjoyed themselves thoroughly. One evening the military chaplain was put up to say the usual grace before dinner, a rather long and complicated prayer, but he was so drunk that he was quite helpless and had to be taken away. The naval chaplain was then sent for, but he turned out to be even more intoxicated than his colleague, so that the captain of the *Orel* and his passengers had finally to sit down to a graceless dinner.

Northwood had many long talks and discussions with Colonel Dashkoff, who had served during the whole of the Russo-Turkish war. Particularly interesting were the

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colonel's accounts of the Russian army at San Stefano in constant expectation of the order to march into Constantinople, and how he and certain other officers dressed themselves in mufti, and sat about in the cafés of the Turkish capital picking up any information likely to be useful. The movements of the British fleet upset the plans of the Russians completely, to the bitter disappointment of the whole army. Dashkoff said more than once that he liked the British people as a race, but that he thought that their political aims were simply detestable !

On her due date the *Orel* arrived at Odessa. Northwood was surprised at the extent and handsome appearance of the port and town. Built on the site of a Turkish fort, Odessa, under the Russian flag, has become a very important and prosperous centre of commerce, attracting great numbers of British steamers to participate in its trade.

Northwood noticed many of his fellow-passengers reeling about the streets of Odessa pretty well filled up with vodka. Poor fellows ! they were no longer under the paternal care of Colonel Dashkoff, and having been deprived of anything stronger than tea for some six weeks, were now making up for lost time.

As for that beautiful steamer the *Orel*, her fate was melancholy in the extreme. Fitted up at Toulon as a hospital-ship during the war, she was captured by the Japanese at the battle of Tsushima, and condemned as a prize, although she was an unarmed ship under the protection of the Red Cross.

From Odessa Northwood went to Nicolaieff, another very fine port on the River Boug, possessing immense natural advantages which are now being turned to some account. Here he saw and admired the statue to Admiral Greig, a fighting man of the first class, whose victories gained in waters so widely separated as the Baltic and the Dardanelles are inscribed in letters of bronze on the pedestal of his monument. The gallant Scotsman served

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his Russian masters with a devotion equal to his courage, and was evidently a great favourite with them.

At Moscow, which seemed to him the most beautiful and interesting city which he had yet seen, Northwood, received on all sides with the greatest kindness, determined to make some slight acknowledgment of the hospitality lavished on him by inviting a few of his newly-found friends to a *zavtrak*—what we should call a lunch—at the well-known Hermitage Restaurant. It was quite a good meal; indeed, it might have been called excellent, and including various tips, it cost exactly five hundred roubles, or well over fifty pounds sterling. It was Northwood's first lesson in the art of entertaining friends in Russia. Naturally caviare, sterlet, French champagne, and other good things run into money, and a Russian lunch is apt to be a prolonged and enthusiastic affair.

The vastness and magnificence of St. Petersburg made a deep impression on our traveller, but it is, of course, much more of an ordinary European capital, despite its strongly marked characteristics, than historic Moscow. Here Northwood saw a good deal of Admiral Paul Tirtoff, the Minister of Marine. He was much surprised to find the Minister so well posted in a host of minor details relating to the ports of the Far East, while his desire to get further information was very noticeable. His Excellency, remarking that it was difficult to have a quiet conversation during the ordinary official hours, requested Northwood to call on him at the Admiralty on the following Sunday morning.

When Northwood kept his appointment, he found the vast Admiralty buildings deserted by all except the sentries and door-keepers, who had special instructions to let him pass. Admiral Tirtoff, however, was ready to receive him in his private office, a huge and magnificently appointed room. Here the Russian admiral and the British shipping clerk were at leisure to discuss to their hearts' content the subjects which interested them. It

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was a lesson to Northwood that Russians of exalted rank are sometimes singularly zealous in the execution of their duties, and it was beginning to dawn upon him that they are very fond of doing some of their most important business at odd hours—such as the middle of the night, or the hours preceding the dawn, or on a Sunday, when British diplomatists and other Britons of much humbler callings are supposed to be in church, and wherever else they may be are certainly not to be found in their offices.

Northwood thought that it would be a good thing to have some assistance in his negotiations with the Russian Admiralty, so he sought the support and advice of the British Embassy. He had been given a special letter of introduction to the Commercial Attaché, which seemed likely to be useful to him at this juncture. He soon discovered, however, that he had struck the British Embassy at a most unfortunate moment. A handsomely liveried *suisse* informed him that the new Ambassador, Sir Nicolas O'Connor, had not yet arrived from Pekin to take up his post in St. Petersburg, while the Commercial Attaché was away doing something or other in the Caucasus. The *suisse* very politely offered to see about making an appointment with some other attaché, but Northwood had now made up his mind to fight his own battle, without any assistance from others, and declined the proposed meeting. He thought at the moment that a more lively interest was exhibited in mundane affairs generally at the Russian Admiralty than at the British Embassy; but he was to discover in later years, that given good and sufficient reason, the Embassy will not hesitate to exercise a considerable influence in favour of a commendable British interest.

The Emperor Alexander III. happened to be in residence at Peterhof, and Northwood, desiring to see something of the celebrated palace and its gardens, sent his passport to Peterhof with a request that he might be allowed to

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visit the place on the following day. He promptly received the required permission. On arriving at the palace, he was received by a polite official, who took especial trouble to show him some of the chief objects of interest, and promised to introduce him into the Emperor's private apartments directly they were vacated.

The imperial family were just on the point of leaving for the Winter Palace, and Northwood, having ascertained that they would pass immediately beneath his windows at the Hôtel de France, declared that he would sooner see the Emperor than his palace, and thanking his guide for his courtesy, took the next river steamer back to St. Petersburg, and by dint of haste got to his hotel just in time. The Empress and her sister the Princess of Wales passed by in the first carriage; then came other royalties and distinguished personages, and finally the Emperor himself in a small open phaeton, drawn by one horse. The Emperor looked well and strong, albeit the malady which was destined to carry him off not long afterwards had already declared itself. The street was crammed with an enthusiastic crowd cheering their Emperor to the echo; every window and all the roofs were packed with people. Some few mounted gendarmes found great difficulty in clearing a way for the imperial carriage, which progressed very slowly, and thus gave the whole of that vast gathering an opportunity of closely scrutinizing the Emperor.

To Northwood Alexander III. appeared to be a true picture of nobility and majesty. This, then, was the man who found Russia a bloody wreck within and without, and after a reign of unbroken peace left her prosperous and mighty. Alexander III. had precisely the stamp of an emperor who had achieved such a great task.

The Emperor of Russia is King of Poland. Northwood found to his great surprise, when he got to Warsaw, that

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Poland, so impoverished and wasted by foreign and domestic wars under the sway of her native princes, flourishes amazingly under her Russian King, otherwise the Tsar of all the Russias. At that time the population of Warsaw was over seven hundred thousand souls, and it was confidently expected that once the great Siberian railway was in good working order, the inhabitants of the city would easily exceed a million.

While Austrian Poland is miserably poor, and Prussian Poland is under the master's harrow, Russian Poland waxes fat and prospers apace. No doubt the fact that Russian Poland contains exceedingly valuable coal-measures and iron-mines has much to do with this result, though it is not so easy to explain why Lodz, but a short distance from Warsaw, should have become the Manchester of the Russian Empire and the centre of a trade of vast magnitude.

Warsaw, like Odessa, simply swarms with Jews. The Hebrews, like the Poles, have been subjected to certain persecution by the Russians, but they thrive in Russia as they do in no other country. Their grasp on the finance and commerce of the Empire of the Tsar is so powerful as to be almost beyond belief. The wealth which this alien race is acquiring in Russia is colossal, and increases at an exorbitant rate. It is regrettable that the discontent of the Jews should increase with their wealth and power, but the student of human nature will doubtless have small difficulty in explaining this phenomenon.

Second in importance only to the Jewish ascendancy in Russia, with which it is frequently allied, is the German penetration of the great northern empire. The Germans are to be found everywhere in Russia pushing a profitable trade into the remotest regions.

The British are practically nowhere in Russia. In Odessa the British colony numbers three hundred, including men, women and children. An effort to issue

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a small English weekly paper failed for want of support after a very brief career. The Germans, on the other hand, number some sixty thousand, and support two daily newspapers published in their own language. They have, too, their own theatre, clubs, churches, and various national societies, all of which are exceedingly prosperous. The Germans deserve their success for their untiring efforts to adapt their trade to the needs of their Russian customers. They have Russian weights and measures at their fingers' ends, and quote their goods in Russian currency. One British consul after another has drawn attention to the folly of British merchants quoting in sterling prices for hundredweights or yards of merchandise to countries which cannot possibly understand our antiquated and complex system of weights and measures.

The Germans, however, are nothing like so fair and straightforward as we are in their dealings with the Russians. The Germans will frequently promise the impossible, or undertake to perform work which they have not the slightest intention of carrying out in the terms of their agreement in order to secure a big contract, trusting to the inertia of the easy-going Russian to make things right in the end, and somehow they manage in nearly every case to escape the payment of justly incurred penalties. Thus, while the British are liked and respected in Russia, the Germans get the trade.

Northwood, going south again, found himself in Sevastopol, one of the most picturesque and interesting cities of Russia. The harbour is one of superb natural facilities, possessed of admirably sheltered positions with deep water, where the largest ships can lie securely at anchor within a few yards of the shore. As a commercial proposition Sevastopol is simply magnificent, and would give the Russians a port in the Black Sea of immense value to their trade and to the fertile region behind it. But, as all the world knows, the place is fortified to the teeth,

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and its commerce is ruthlessly sacrificed to purely naval and military considerations.

A few years ago Sevastopol might have been considered impregnable, but the Russians themselves appear to have some doubts as to its defensibility against the tremendous artillery of the latest type of battleships. The place certainly seems open to attack from the sea under modern conditions, and there is some talk of restoring Nicolaieff to its former glory as a great naval station. It should be a comparatively easy, if costly, matter to defend the approaches to Nicolaieff so as to make it a deadly risk for any hostile fleet to venture anywhere near the port situated at the confluence of the Boug and the Ingoul. Should the Russians ever decide to make Nicolaieff their naval base, it may be hoped that Sevastopol will be thrown open to the trade of Russia.

Northwood rambled about the old battlefields, admired the lovely harbour of Balaclava, and going over the beautiful Baidar Pass, drove along the splendid road cut in the face of the towering cliffs bordering the Black Sea until, passing through Aloupka and Livadia, he reached Yalta, which he made his head-quarters for the time being.

Here, indeed, was a land studded with palaces and villas, and rejoicing in miles of fertile vineyards, fields of tobacco, and gardens teeming with apricots, peaches, pears, plums, melons and other fruits, and perfumed with a wealth of flowers. In this wonderful country the Russian and Tartar live in amity, their deadly feuds of ancient days completely forgotten. The cross of the Orthodox church gleams in the air in close proximity to the minaret of the Mohammedan mosque, and none find it strange.

The Tartars are treated with every consideration and kindness by the Russians, and to Northwood, accustomed as he was to Asiatic servility, the particularly independent bearing and general attitude of these same Tartars appeared to be absolutely scandalous.

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From Yalta Northwood pursued his road to Aloushta, where Napoleon III. had an idea at one time of landing an army corps. From Aloushta to the inland town of Simpheropol the splendid military road winds its way among mountains and forests of the greatest beauty until the summit of the pass is reached, under the snow-clad peaks of Ayu Dagh. The road, which runs through miles of oak-forest, descends gradually into the level and fertile plains surrounding Simpheropol. From this town, which Northwood had reached with horses, he prosaically took the train to Baktchi Serai, the ancient capital of the Tartar Khans. The population of the place is to this day exclusively Tartar, with the exception of a handful of Russian officials, whose chief duty appears to be the preservation of the extensive and exceedingly interesting palace of the Khans, which such travellers as penetrate to Baktchi Serai never fail to visit.

From Baktchi Serai Northwood took a train *viâ* the Mackenzie Heights and Alma to Sevastopol. During his journeys in Russia he never thought for a moment that it was to be his future home. Russia appeared to him at that time a mighty power which nothing could shake. Should anyone have told him he would one day behold with his own eyes the port of Odessa in flames for miles, while amidst the incessant rattle of machine-guns and rifles men dropped dead in her streets and on her quays in hundreds, he would have said that he was listening to the ravings of a madman. Yet he was to see not only all this, but the yet stranger spectacle of the *Knaz Potemkin* and her consorts of the Black Sea fleet lying off the Port of Odessa flying the red flag and firing shells into the city! But he recked little of all these horrors to come, when after some extensive and delightful wanderings he finally left St. Petersburg for London.

It was now several years since Northwood had last left England with high hopes of a brilliant future, and it was not without emotion that he once more saw the cliffs

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of Dover. He was truly delighted to find himself in England again, and was very pleased to discover plenty of scope for his activity in London and on the Continent. He was in no hurry to return to the Far East as long as he could be usefully employed at home.

Apparently his prolonged absence from Singapore caused some heartburnings and jealousies there, for letters were sent home, addressed to influential quarters, in which mention was made of a report that Northwood was unable to leave London because he was shortly about to appear in the Divorce Court as co-respondent. The letters insinuated, in fact, that he was prolonging his stay in Europe, not to promote important interests as he pretended, but because he had to defend a disreputable case.

Northwood had no trouble in proving that he was not implicated in a divorce case or any other difficulty whatsoever which interfered with his leaving by the next boat if desired, but he keenly resented what had been done.

This business of the divorce case proved to be a mere fleabite compared with charges brought against Northwood at a later period, but the incident decided Northwood to leave England without delay and to resume his duties at Singapore.

This was not a simple matter, however, as he had many things to arrange on his long road. He had already been to such ports as Havre, Rotterdam, Amsterdam, Hamburg and Bremen. He now left *viâ* Paris for Switzerland, thence to Genoa and Venice and through Trieste to Vienna. From Vienna he once more found his way to Warsaw, St. Petersburg, Moscow and Odessa, where he took his passage by a Russian mail steamer to Alexandria.

He left for the Far East buoyant with hope, and confident that he would multiply successes already achieved. He was still a young man, singularly sanguine,

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and full of the *joie de vivre* which no adverse fortunes had been able to blunt. No ambitious lad fresh from school could have faced the future with greater confidence. Blessed is youth! As Louis John Jennings has it, "Upon the horizon of the young there is perpetual sunshine, for to them all things are possible or seem to be so, and death is distant, and trouble but a name heard in a dream."

CHAPTER XXXIV

JAPAN

NORTHWOOD arrived at Singapore after an absence of two years. His mother was naturally delighted to see him. Her son's letters, which reached her regularly by every mail, had been a great comfort to her, but that she should have her Johnnie back again seemed to her almost too good to be true. She was living tranquilly in her pretty bungalow in town, and could always drive out to her Ayer Manis estate whenever she wanted a change. She would not now have cared to go back to the gaieties of Woodleigh. As long as she had her son with her she was serenely happy, albeit she had perforce to become accustomed to his frequent absences from Singapore.

Northwood took up his former position in the offices of the Golconda Company, and found his work as interesting as ever. After twelve months of routine duty, the necessity of further constructive work became apparent. Japanese coals were then a leading factor in the trade of Singapore, and it became evident that this business would have to be organized and put on a proper basis. Various interests of some importance in China had also to be considered, and it was finally decided that Northwood should make a journey to the North in order to settle some difficult questions on the spot. As he afterwards discovered, it was no small matter which he was undertaking on his voyage to China and Japan.

His route was now *viâ* Hong-Kong, Foochow and

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Shanghai, and the last-named he left on board the *Empress of India* for Nagasaki.

Here he went ashore absolutely prepossessed in favour of everything Japanese ; so many of his friends had painted the country as being a tourists' paradise, and had insisted so enthusiastically on the charm of the Japanese character, that he was in love with this strange people before he had so much as seen their native land.

Northwood was delighted with his quarters at the Bellevue Hotel, from the verandahs of which he gazed with eager eyes at the beauties of Nagasaki harbour, and at the theatrical pageant of Japanese life to be enjoyed at every moment. Never had he seen anything so original and bright in all his many travels. Everything was new and charming.

One of his first impressions of Nagasaki was the strong Russian influence that predominated among the various foreign elements of the port. A couple of huge Russian Volunteer steamers were at anchor in the harbour close to a Russian cruiser and two Russian gunboats. Many of the Japanese shops exhibited signs in Russian characters, and Northwood was told that Russians had acquired a great deal of property in and about Nagasaki, and that both their officers and civilians constantly came across from Vladivostok in search of health and amusement. Russians and Japanese were apparently the best of friends in those days.

Northwood's first experience of business of any kind with the Japanese was of a somewhat disconcerting nature. He had barely got into his quarters at the Bellevue Hotel when he was waited on by two absurdly polite persons, who represented that they were skilled in the art of washing and getting up linen. They begged the honour of taking away his things, promising to bring them back next morning spotlessly white, and in perfect order. Northwood, only too happy to have things done so expeditiously, handed over a pretty big wash, with which

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they departed amidst smiles and salutations to the very ground. Next morning the two absurdly polite persons turned up at an early hour with a basket of snow-white linen. On the bosom of a spotless shirt, glazed until it shone like a mirror, there glittered a newly-minted silver coin of handsome dimensions—a yen, or Japanese dollar. The polite persons explained that they had found this yen in the pocket of one of the white garments confided to their care, and they, of course, took the first opportunity of returning it to its rightful owner. Northwood was so delighted with this exhibition of honesty that he insisted upon their keeping the silver yen as a token of his esteem, paid a pretty stiff washing-bill without a murmur and allowed the Japanese to put the things away for him in a wardrobe at the other side of the room, after which they took their departure. Later in the day, when our young friend wanted to make himself look particularly smart in order to pay a few visits, he found that in place of all his linen and white drill suits he had but one beautifully got-up shirt. The rest of the kit in the wardrobe was nothing but a collection of very nicely bleached but utterly useless odds and ends. He rushed off with his tale of woe to the worthy French landlady of the Bellevue, to be told that he had been robbed. Was there not a printed notice in his room warning travellers not to entrust their washing to any but the recognized servants of the hotel?

“You will have to be very careful with these Japanese, monsieur,” remarked the landlady, “or you will lose much else besides your linen. You have fallen an easy victim to the outsiders who hang round foreign hotels waiting for a chance to plunder the unwary European.”

Northwood was thunderstruck. Well, it was what some Americans would call smart, very smart indeed! It was but a small thing in its way, but, as he afterwards discovered, it was typically Japanese.

After a short stay in Nagasaki, Northwood set out on

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his real mission, which was to discover all that he could about Japanese coal-mines and coals, and to buy large supplies at what he considered the most favourable moment.

So he started for the nearest group of mines with Mr. Harry Slingsby, of Nagasaki, who was to act as his guide and friend for the next few days. Slingsby was quite after Northwood's own heart, a clever, cheery mortal, who understood his business thoroughly and spoke Japanese fluently.

The pair of them left Nagasaki at five o'clock sharp on a fine morning, packed in a couple of jinrikshas. Slingsby being a light weight, some five feet nothing in particular in height, was rattled over the roads by a couple of men harnessed tandem-fashion to his riksha. Northwood had three men allotted to his vehicle on account of his size. One of the three pushed energetically at a bar fixed for that purpose at the back of his riksha.

The men went at a great pace, to the surprise and admiration of Northwood, who was enjoying himself to the utmost. The air was keen, the scenery beautiful, and everything perfectly new and interesting. How wonderfully pretty and at the same time scientific was the cultivation of the paddy on the hillsides, each little field banked up with stones with the water flowing regularly from one rice-plantation to the other. Never was rice so carefully tilled and weeded, but Northwood noted with astonishment that nearly all the bent figures toiling in water and ooze up to their knees were those of women.

Reaching Tokitsu, the travellers crossed a noble sheet of water to Haiiki, and getting into their rikshas once more pursued their journey to the town of Imari. On this stretch of the road the inconveniences of riksha-travelling began to tell on the new arrival in the country. Sitting in a cramped position, with a leather suit-case between his knees, he got sore and stiff as one hour succeeded the other. He begged to be allowed to walk a little so as to

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stretch his cramped limbs, but the riksha men would not listen to any slowing down in their speed, and he had to remain in the vehicle whether he liked it or not.

After a halt at Imari, Northwood found to his horror that Slingsby intended making a night journey to Karatsu. All the riksha-pullers were changed at Imari, with the exception of one—a lean, lathy Japanese, who was the leader of Northwood's team, and who insisted on going right through to Karatsu in order that he might earn some more money. The fellow seemed absolutely impervious to fatigue.

Slingsby had everybody on the road again by six-thirty p.m. Soon they had left the hills behind them and their route now lay through paddy-swamps saturated with sewage. The "roads" were rough dykes running through the rice-fields, over which the rikshas bumped their way painfully. As night set in, a chill mist rose from the swamps, laden with the most noisome odours conceivable.

After three or four hours of this sort of thing, it seemed to Northwood that the fun had died out of the expedition altogether. When Karatsu was at last reached, some time after midnight, Northwood, whose white clothing was saturated with moisture, was so chilled and stiff that he could scarcely get himself out of his riksha. He felt feverish and ill. Even Slingsby confessed that he had had quite enough of it. They now paid off their riksha-pullers. The lean, lathy man, who had been racing over the country pulling a heavy load from five o'clock in the morning until midnight, got four yen, or about eight shillings—quite a large sum. Northwood suggested that he should buy a house with the money, but Slingsby said that it would probably be spent in *saki*.

Sure enough, they saw the man who had performed this wonderful feat of endurance reeling drunk in one of the streets of Karatsu next day. Riksha-pulling must necessarily be a very unhealthy occupation under any

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circumstances, and no doubt uses up a man very quickly ; but the Japanese take to this work with great avidity, because it pays them better than other labour.

The next two days were spent in looking over the Mutabe and Yoshinatana mines, where Northwood saw women working stark naked underground. Leaving this district, a six hours' journey brought the travellers to Takeo, where a ramshackle train took them to the Straits of Shimonoseki.

At Bakan the travellers were entertained at Fujino's famous inn by a small group of wealthy mine-owners. The meal, which we should call a supper, was a prolonged and costly affair. Geisha girls sang and danced, affording the new-comer an exceedingly novel and interesting spectacle. Slingsby frustrated an attempt to introduce champagne, on the score that it makes a heart-breaking and head-splitting mixture with *saki*, and, doubtless, he was quite right. Meanwhile the *saki* cups flew from hand to hand, as is the Japanese custom, and bottle after bottle of this liquor was emptied. Towards daylight things got very noisy and the whole entertainment uncommonly like a debauch. Still, it was not only an amusing, but a very useful experience.

The next day Slingsby had to return to Nagasaki and leave Northwood to his own resources. Our hero spent some weeks in the region of Moji, Bakan and Wakamatsu learning his lessons with great diligence. His Japanese friends were pressing him to buy coals all the time, and made him some very tempting offers. They had heavy stocks of which they were anxious to get rid ; but Northwood, who had formed a very fair idea of the situation, thought he had better wait until he inspected the northern fields before operating on any considerable scale.

Leaving Bakan by a Japanese steamer, Northwood sailed to Kobe. Here an incident which made some impression on his mind was the death of his agents' stevedore. This unfortunate Japanese, an estimable and

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hard-working man, had been coerced into paying blackmail to a number of men of the *soshi* class. Finding the increasing claims of these ruffians becoming intolerable, he at last refused to pay them any more than a certain sum per week. Promptly he was stabbed to death as a lesson to other employers of labour. This murder was perpetrated with absolute impunity. It does not seem to be the fashion to talk much of *soshi* nowadays, but ten or twelve years ago frequent mention was made of them in Japan. It was said at the time that one of the most celebrated of Japanese statesmen paid a band of *soshi* so much per month not to kill him. The great man took care to hand over the stipulated blackmail punctually, because he knew perfectly well that the men with whom he had to deal would murder him without fail, and without being in the slightest degree deterred by the prospect of the gallows or any other punishment which might overtake them. A singular disregard of the value of human life is one of the leading characteristics of the Japanese.

After a perfectly frightful passage in a steamer which ran into what is facetiously termed, "the tail-end of a typhoon," Northwood reached Yokohama, where with the assistance of able and willing friends he set to work to prepare his northern campaign.

The American squadron lay at anchor in Yokohama, and had been there for weeks. The ships looked smart enough, and this was odd, because the permanent headquarters of the squadron appeared to be located at the Grand Hotel, where American officers, American ladies and an American band were always to be found. Every part of the great building, from the bar to the bedrooms, was full of them, and, moreover, they all seemed to be the nicest people in the world, from the admiral to the bandmaster. Exactly how the Americans manage their navy is a mystery to the benighted Briton, but it does its work all right.

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Northwood had been repeatedly advised by men who understood their business not to put the slightest trust in the Japanese with whom he was about to negotiate at Tokio; and he was also warned that in no event need he expect to get any sort of justice in Japanese courts of law, in which the mere colour of his skin would ensure his defeat.

Truth to say, the papers of the period were full of cases of corruption, in one of which—the Tokio Waterworks scandal—some of the very highest of the Japanese law officers were deeply concerned. There were also many stories current about the bribery on a large scale of members of parliament. Northwood himself had particulars, given by one of the leaders of the Opposition, of some very disgraceful transactions over a vote for constructing new harbour works at one of the big ports.

It had been decided on grounds of policy that Northwood should go to Tokio alone, and manage his campaign unaided by his European friends at Yokohama. On arriving at the Tokio railway station, he found himself greeted by a deputation of Japanese gentlemen who had come to meet him, and who were all bows and smiles. These were very important personages, representing large mining and railway interests, who desired to show every attention and honour to the young Englishman.

A squad of rikshas conveyed the whole party to a large block of buildings, in which were the offices of one of the great mining and railway concerns of Japan. The offices, though extensive, had a dusty and shabby look about them. Northwood expected that business would be brought on for consideration immediately, but the meeting at the company's offices appeared to be merely a formal one, at which our hero was ceremoniously introduced to a number of Japanese gentlemen. The whole party then got into their rikshas, and although it was no later than noon, proceeded to a theatre to see one of those Japanese plays which last all day and most of the night. The

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tragedy in progress was a very bloody performance. Women and men met with violent deaths at every turn of the story, and the cold steel had a busy time of it. The actors had a device by means of which a crimson gash followed a sword cut, and this pleased the vast audience mightily. It was all highly interesting, but the theme of vengeance and murder was so very prominent throughout as to be rather distasteful to an ordinary Englishman.

After two or three hours at the theatre, the Japanese took Northwood to the Maple Hall, a very beautiful place, where he was most sumptuously feasted, and entertained like a prince by a troupe of geisha girls, such as are but seldom seen by foreigners. A visit to the temples and tombs of the Shoguns ended a sufficiently remarkable day, during which precious little was said about anything in the shape of business!

The following day was spent chiefly in making new friends in Tokio, one of whom called for Northwood at the Imperial Hotel, and took him to see that very extraordinary place, the Yoshiwara, a sort of city of courtesans, said to number some thirty thousand. There must have been miles of brilliantly lit-up houses, in which thousands of women, elaborately dressed and painted, were exhibited as in a shop-front on benches raised one above the other. The amateur was thus enabled to survey as many of them as he chose, and if he was so minded, he could enter the house and ask for the fourth girl on the sixth bench, for instance. Numbers of Europeans, including some ladies, used to visit the Yoshiwara, until the Government got ashamed of the place and decreed its abolition.

The puppet-shows in the streets of Tokio were such marvels of dexterity as almost to magnetize Northwood, albeit they represented revolting scenes. In the hands of the Japanese expert, the little dolls in the glass-fronted box became instinct with life. The crouching figure of the guilty woman in the corner actually quivered with

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fear as the outraged husband, with some quick strokes, sharpened his dagger on a whetstone. Then in the final scene the operator reproduced the shrieks of the dying woman most realistically as her husband stabbed her to death. All very clever, but quite horrible.

During one of the Tokio festivals, Northwood, like all other foreigners, was greatly taken by the gaiety of the scene, and especially by the captivating prettiness of the little children, dressed in all the colours of the rainbow. But it was not a pleasant sight to see these wee ones clustering round a tub containing three or four carp, which the children were trying to hook with a miniature rod and line. They generally succeeded in getting their hooks into the fishes' bellies; if they could get a fish out of the tub the fish was theirs; but as either the rod or line were calculated to snap under the weight of the fish, the children almost always lost their prey together with the copper coin paid to the proprietor of the tub. It was not nice to see an unfortunate carp swimming languidly round with a dozen or two of hooks stuck into it, or to hear the chorus of childish glee which greeted a fresh strike and a fresh effort to lift the wretched fish over the edge of the tub. The Japanese seem to learn cruelty as an art from the earliest possible moment.

The days passed swiftly enough at Tokio, and business now commenced to mingle with pleasure. After a considerable amount of preliminary fencing, the terms of a contract for one hundred thousand tons of northern coal began to assume some consistency. A little later proposals had got so far into definite shape that Northwood agreed to sign a contract for one hundred thousand tons, provided that he considered the business satisfactory after he had visited the mines himself. This much being settled, it was decided that he should leave for the extreme north of Japan with as little delay as possible.

Fuji-San, the director of the Japanese Company, gave Northwood one of his own men, a smart young fellow

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named Kada, to accompany him on his expedition as private secretary, guide and interpreter. His European friends strongly recommended Northwood to take a cook and servant with him, but he disliked travelling about with a troop of people, and disregarded this advice, much to his subsequent regret. His desire for simplicity resulted in the endurance of daily discomfort, and very often in the want of anything which a foreigner could consider eatable or drinkable.

The journey from Tokio to Aomori, a distance of four hundred and fifty miles by rail, was a most tiresome business. The average speed of the train over the whole distance was about twenty miles an hour, with stoppages at little wayside stations practically every few minutes. It took as nearly as possible forty-eight hours to do this comfortless journey. Kada turned out to be a most extraordinary travelling companion. At times he would hustle round and take no denial from lazy innkeepers, insisting on getting eggs, fish, or whatever else was required, and Northwood would be all right. But frequently Kada would tell his new master with a lack-lustre eye that there was nothing to be got. If Kada said so, he made it an actual fact, and poor Northwood had to go hungry. It was certainly a pity that Kada's appetite was so capricious!

From the port of Aomori Northwood and Kada sailed for Hakodate and Mororan in an old wooden packet over twenty years of age, which steamed eight knots when she was doing her best. However, the ancient *Matsumaye Maru* got into Hakodate harbour, which is singularly beautiful, and thence proceeded to Mororan, the fishing village which was to become Northwood's head-quarters for many a long day.

At first sight Mororan, which is marked in European maps as being situated in Volcano Bay, appeared pretty and picturesque. The bay itself is very fine, and Northwood noticed a deep pool of clear sea water encircled in

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a magnificent rocky circus in which he decided to commence his daily swims bright and early next morning. The big, straggling fishing village added nothing to the beauty of the scene, while extensive and grimy coal wharves built of worm-eaten timbers disfigured the outlook most horribly. However, these same dirty and hideous wharves were the only attraction which Mororan possessed for the English visitor.

That night Northwood sat on the floor of his little room in the only inn of Mororan feeling uncomfortable and unhappy. He had made a mess of the meagre Japanese meal put on the floor in lacquered trays and bowls. He did not know how to eat with chopsticks and missed such conveniences as chairs and tables more than any ordinary mortal could think. He had no idea what to do with his big limbs. When he stood up his head all but touched the ceiling and he felt frightfully cramped. Kada, who had somehow tied his legs into a sort of knot, squatted on the floor, looking the picture of ease and comfort.

There was no use in going out that night, as a white sea-fog had crept into Volcano Bay, which made it impossible to see anything a yard ahead of one. Kada proposed getting lanterns and going to spend the evening at the local Yoshiwara; but Northwood gave his vote against the project, and (it being impossible to read by the light of the small and smoky kerosene lamp at his disposal) decided to go to bed at an unusually early hour. This was a matter easily arranged. At Kada's command a greasy and slatternly wench, with streaming nose, unrolled a coarse cotton mat and stretched it on the floor. The bedroom was now ready, and Kada, unwinding his flexible legs, got up and said good-night to his master.

Northwood tried hard to get to sleep, but it was no easy matter. As the only white man of Mororan, he was a great curiosity to one of the most inquisitive people in the world, and the fact that he was in their eyes a

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veritable giant, whose head touched their ceilings, added uncomfortably to their interest in his personality. As he turned restlessly on his mat, he was aware that a sliding panel in his room was being pushed to one side, and giggles of delight testified to the amusement that he afforded to the ladies of the establishment. At last he dropped off into an uneasy slumber, from which he was aroused with the horrid shock of a blinding light being flashed in his eyes. As soon as he could grasp the situation he found that the trouble was caused by a little Japanese policeman, who, squatting comfortably by the side of the mat, had jammed his bull's-eye lantern to the tip of the recumbent Northwood's nose.

The bedevilled foreigner was given to understand that his passport was wanted! This, of course, was pure persecution, the passport having been lodged hours before; but Northwood had to rouse his landlord and satisfy the zealous policeman that everything was in order. This old passport business used to be an unmitigated nuisance. Every scurvy little policeman would stop a foreigner in the street and make him produce his passport.

Scanty and very ill-cooked food was but one of the least of Northwood's troubles. The absolute want of anything answering to sanitation, the difficulty of getting clean water, and his unsavoury surroundings were his real trials. He fondly hoped that a certain bathroom, dark and unwholesome as it happened to be, was his own private property, until he went into it one day and found a couple of Japanese—a man and a woman—sitting in the square wooden box which served for a bath-tub, busily washing themselves. He discovered that not only was the bath, which had been paid for by him, used by all and sundry, but that the water it contained was changed at intervals of a few days. That evening he fancied that his tea had a peculiar taste, and wishing to make a fresh brew for himself, he ordered one of the servants to refill his kettle. He followed the girl to find where she got the

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water from, and was more astonished than pleased when he saw her dip the kettle into that useful bath-tub !

From Mororan Northwood made expeditions to Sapporo, the capital of Hokkaido, as the northern island is styled. It is a town of considerable size, and has manufactures of some importance. He went repeatedly to Otaru, another coaling port, and inland to Yubari to inspect the valuable and extensive mines, which produce some of the best coal in Japan.

Having satisfied himself after repeated and careful surveys that all was well in Hokkaido, Northwood was suddenly stirred into action by the receipt of a telegram from his Yokohama agents to the effect that a partner in the firm of Armstrong, Ogilvie and Co. had left Singapore for Japan, apparently with the object of securing large supplies of coal. He lost no time in taking the earliest opportunity of getting back to Tokio, where after certain delays he signed his big contract with Fuji-San.

Curiously enough, this very important document was not executed at the offices of the Japanese Company, but at a fashionable tea-house. Fuji-San was accompanied on this occasion by the whole of his fellow-directors and his chief officials. Never was business conducted with greater gaiety. Geisha girls sang, while champagne was handed to all and sundry, with pressing invitations to drink and fill up the glasses again. The contract itself was written in Japanese by no less a person than Fuji-San himself, and this was signed by Northwood. Fuji-San signed an English translation of the same document, which correctly embodied the provisions of the contract drawn up in Fuji-San's own handwriting. There were no legal formalities, because Northwood had no intention of resorting to Japanese law in any conceivable circumstances. Much hilarity, champagne and geisha music marked the close of this business.

A regular banquet followed, during which Fuji-San and two of his principal co-directors urged Northwood to

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go to Vladivostok and use his influence to persuade the Russians to transfer their coaling business to the Hokkaido ports instead of sending all their steamers to Nagasaki. This seemed to be a reasonable and acceptable proposal. The geographical position of the northern ports was all in their favour, while the coal offering at Otaru and Mororan was excellent. Northwood turned the idea rapidly over in his mind, and having nothing which need detain him in Japan for the moment, decided to leave for Vladivostok at once, to the great satisfaction of his Japanese friends.

He left Nagasaki on board of the *Saratoff*, and in a little more than forty-eight hours afterwards found himself staring with amazed eyes at Vladivostok, a town so typically Russian in its aspect, that he felt as if he had been suddenly wafted back from Japan to the shores of the Black Sea.

"Why shouldn't it look Russian?" one of the ship's officers said to him. "You may say that the whole city of Vladivostok, down to the last nail used in its construction, has been brought here in the holds of the ships of the Volunteer Fleet!"

Certainly Vladivostok looked Russian enough. The scene seemed most familiar with its bleak hills, cold, wintry sky and dark horizon. There were the forts and great lines of barracks, the domes of the Orthodox churches amidst the houses rising in terraces on the hillsides. The city swarmed with soldiers of all arms, just as the harbour was full of warships, with torpedo-boats nosing uneasily about, as if some enemy might be expected at any moment.

Vladivostok was a terribly rough and unfinished place in 1896; the roads were muddy swamps bordered with plank walks, on which Russian soldiers and civilians jostled stray Chinese, Koreans and Japanese. Northwood had had a room taken for him at one of the hotels, which, as usual, were crowded, so it was quite a favour to get a bed in any one of them. He viewed his new quarters

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with much disfavour. His bed-linen was cloudy beyond description, and everything else was equally grimy. He got, however, quite a good dinner of wholesome food served with Russian profusion, which made such a pleasant change from the meagre and revolting fare of Mororan that such little matters as a stained table-cloth and unwashed cutlery were readily forgiven. But towards the end of dinner a number of strangers of both sexes invaded the hotel, and pouring into the dining-room forthwith started a first-class free fight amongst themselves, in which everybody else, including the landlord and his servants, presently took a hand. Northwood, by dint of great coolness, managed to dodge various unwashed fists and the pieces of crockery which were flying about, and made his escape from what was doubtless the most animated *table d'hôte* at which he had ever dined. He then packed his traps and took refuge on board the *Saratoff*, where he was made welcome and comfortable. The hospitable and kindly captain of this fine steamer invited him to make the *Saratoff* his home as long as he remained at Vladivostok, an offer much too good to be refused.

Northwood's progress was hindered by the arrival of Prince Khilkoff, in whose honour the town was decorated. Everybody in Vladivostok who was of any importance was in attendance on the great man, who had come to inspect the final section of the Siberian Railway, and no one had any time to spare for a stray Englishman. Things being slack, therefore, he thought he might as well see a little of the Siberian Railway.

Warned not to go too far up the line, as "washouts" were frequent and delays occurred from various causes, Northwood contented himself with booking for the first station, Nadejdinskaia, some forty miles from Vladivostok. Leaving at eight a.m., he expected to catch a train from Nadejdinskaia at two p.m., and to be back in Vladivostok two hours later. The train rolled its way very slowly past some beautiful seascapes and through some pretty

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country, in which hills and dales diversified extensive plains rich in grass and foliage ; but of any kind of population there was not a trace. The railway track itself appeared to be of the most rotten description. Light rails were spiked on rough, soft-wood sleepers. Much of the line was laid on a sort of earthwork, which meandered through melancholy swamps. A Russian passenger explained that the track was all wrong, and that some day the whole of the Vladivostok section would have to be reconstructed on an entirely different plan.

Arriving at Nadejdinskaia, Northwood found that the place consisted of a neat railway station and a few buildings and outhouses, in which the stationmaster, the telegraphist, and a handful of railway people had their habitation. Of unofficial population there was absolutely none. It can be hardly open to doubt that Northwood was the first unofficial passenger who had ever set foot on the platform of the station. Nadejdinskaia was a purely ridiculous and incredible sort of place, which had not a shadow of excuse for its useless existence. The stationmaster and his staff made much of their solitary passenger and saw to it that he enjoyed a singularly substantial lunch of much excellence. The next few hours were spent in admiring the superb pigs, turkeys, geese and fowls bred by the stationmaster and in having occasional drinks with him.

The afternoon passed away pleasantly, but without any sign of the train for Vladivostok. "*Tchort znaet !*" said the stationmaster in answer to anxious inquiries as to the whereabouts of the overdue train. The devil might know where the train was, but the stationmaster certainly had no information whatever about a subject which was of no particular interest to him.

As the shades of evening enveloped the landscape in delicate obscurity, the lamps at the station were lit, and the ever-genial stationmaster invited Northwood to join him at a dinner which was an enlarged edition of the lunch

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of the morning. After spending part of the night having occasional drinks, Northwood asked where he might sleep. This was a poser for the stationmaster, who would have been only too glad to sit up drinking till daylight with his English new friend. There was not such a thing as a spare bed or mattress in all Nadejdinskaia. He would have placed his own bed at his guest's disposal but for certain complications connected with his wife, who had already retired to rest.

Finally it was decided that, since this strange Englishman insisted on going to sleep at an hour when the liquor was still abundant and nobody particularly drunk, a wooden bench put against the wall would make a good enough bed for the occasion. The bench was a good deal shorter than Northwood, who had to take his coat off and roll it into a pillow. However, being a good traveller, he got off to sleep all right, although a good deal of him projected over the end of his bench. He had made up his mind to sleep until daylight and then, if there was no train in sight, to tramp his forty miles into Vladivostok. It was lucky, he thought, that he had not gone further up the line.

However, at three a.m. he was roused by the news that the belated train was at last signalled. He got into it after bidding an affectionate farewell to the stationmaster. The great, heavy carriages of the Russian train proceeded very deliberately indeed over this remarkably shaky section of the line, covering the distance of forty miles in two hours and thirty-five minutes, but the journey to Vladivostok was safely ended.

Of course, all this sort of thing has long since been put in order, and it must be admitted that the construction and maintenance of the gigantic Siberian Railway reflects great credit on Russian enterprise and perseverance. No other European nation has projected anything on so vast a scale and carried it to a successful issue.

Northwood saw nothing of Khilkoff while he was at

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Vladivostok, but by an extraordinary coincidence, he was present at the meeting which took place long years afterwards at St. Petersburg when the prince was attacked by a sudden illness, which proved to be fatal during the course of the same evening.

Finally Northwood made arrangements with Admiral Terentieff to send a steamer of the Volunteer Fleet to one of the Hokkaido ports, either Otaru or Mororan, to fill her bunkers, and also to load a cargo of Yubari coal for Singapore. If the result was quite satisfactory, there was a fine chance of the Russian steamers utilizing the northern ports instead of Nagasaki. This was all that he required and practically ended his business at Vladivostok. He therefore lost no time in returning to Japan.

He sailed in the *Nagato Maru* because there was no Russian steamer available, and after a sufficiently trying and weary journey, found himself back at his ramshackle, dirty and comfortless inn at Mororan.

Here he found things going in his favour. There were huge stocks of coal awaiting shipment, and it so happened that there was any amount of foreign steam tonnage lying idle in Japanese ports, which could be picked up cheap. Northwood's energetic agents at Yokohama had taken advantage of the favourable turn in events to charter a couple of large steamers, which were now loading at Mororan for Singapore. These ships were got away without any trouble and Northwood was looking forward to a rosy time of it when a certain untoward thing happened.

Admiral Terentieff telegraphed to him that the *Ekaterinoslav* would be at his disposal within the next few days; but on repeating this message to Tokio his surprise was intense when he got a categorically worded reply from Fuji-San himself, stating that as Mororan was nominally a naval station, the Japanese Government absolutely declined to permit a Russian Volunteer steamer to visit it. There was much excitement locally about the reported arrival of the Russian steamer, and Northwood,

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finding himself in a most serious position over this affair, cabled to Terentieff, advising him fully of the hostility of the Japanese to the Volunteer steamer, and urging him to send her to Nagasaki in the usual course.

The Admiral chose to be bull-headed over the affair, and telegraphed laconically enough, "You have chartered *Ekaterinoslav*. She sails Thursday morning. What port do you prefer?" Knowing that further remonstrance was useless, he ordered the *Ekaterinoslav* to Otaru, a place which was not even marked on the map as a future naval station. He then wired to his Yokohama agents, instructing them to see the Russian Minister at Tokio immediately, and finally sent a message to Fuji-San reminding him that he himself had insisted on inviting the Russian Volunteers to Hokkaido ports and must therefore be responsible for everything.

Northwood then left for Otaru to see what would happen. Shortly before the Russian steamer arrived he received a telegram from Fuji-San to the effect that the Japanese Government no longer objected to her calling at Hokkaido ports. It was rumoured at the time, that the Russian Minister at Tokio had threatened to send a couple of cruisers with the *Ekaterinoslav* unless she was allowed to enter the ports for the purposes of trade like any other foreign steamer. The Japanese authorities at Otaru had a similar notification officially, but they were full of distrust of the Russian ship. They all swore that she was no merchant steamer, but a spy ship at best. Many of them declared that the *Ekaterinoslav* would arrive with her guns mounted and a regiment stowed away in her 'tween decks. Hokkaido was left in a very defenceless state at this period of our story, and it would not have required any very strong force to capture Otaru and Mororan.

When the great Russian transport, looking as smart and trim as any warship afloat, anchored off Otaru, the feeling of the people, down to the commonest coolie, was

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lashed into a perfect fury. Was that ship a collier? What were all those men in uniform swarming on her decks? Did officers of colliers wear epaulets, sword-belts and dirks? These and a hundred other questions passed between groups of shouting and gesticulating Japanese. Northwood, as the chief spy who had brought about the visit of the Russian vessel, was in an unenviable predicament, insulted and menaced at every turn.

He went off to the *Ekaterinoslav* with a party of police and officials of the colliery company, accompanied by Kada. He was cordially greeted by his old friend, Captain Troyan,* and various officers with whom he was already acquainted. The Japanese officers having made a vigorous examination of the ship and her papers, strictly forbade all communication with the shore, and leaving a police-guard on board took their departure, after having studiously treated Captain Troyan and his officers with the grossest incivility.

The Russians, warned that there was trouble brewing, accepted the Japanese insolence with the tranquil indifference which they so well know how to assume when it suits them. Understanding that Kada was Northwood's secretary, they very kindly asked him to join them at lunch, an invitation which the young Japanese accepted with avidity. Kada was acquisitive and ambitious. Of late he had been slavishly attentive to Northwood, and zealous and obsequious to a degree only to be explained by the fact that he was trying desperately hard to get Northwood to find him a berth in his company's London office. Kada was great on Western civilization, the splendid qualities of the British and the magnificent character of Northwood himself. All he wanted was a couple of years in a first-class London office, on a pay that would just keep him on bread and water. His master was a bit dubious about the wisdom of sending the young fellow to London, and determined to watch him a little more

* Now Admiral Troyan.

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before giving a decided answer on the subject. In the meantime Kada's English was improving wonderfully through his constant association with his master, who often gave him lessons at odd times.

Kada gazed with round-eyed curiosity at everything in the handsome saloon of the *Ekaterinoslav*. While his master sat next to Captain Troyan, he was placed "below the salt" amongst some of the junior officers. Kada, habitually a most abstemious person, was persuaded out of sheer curiosity to try some vodka, after which he drank some Crimean wine. He had no idea that wine was made in Russia, and still less, that champagne came from that country. It is to be feared that the young officers found it amusing to make a fool of one of the Japanese. Be that as it may, Kada's face flushed to the copper tint which denotes intoxication with Japanese and Chinese alike, and a little later, getting excited and noisy to an uncontrollable degree, he rose from his place at table and made a first-class speech in English of remarkable fluency and force, in no way marred by grammatical errors of some frequency. His indictment of Europeans and their vices and follies was something tremendous. Their pride in their colour was scourged vehemently. The day was coming, shrieked Kada, when the despised Yellow-skins would hurl the arrogant white man into the depths of defeat and ruin. Russia would first feel the terrors of Japan's vengeance, but the other nations were not to be spared, and England in particular was to be humbled to the dust and taught the lesson that Japan is for the Japanese! Here Kada went off at a tangent and made his master the target of a singularly able peroration. Northwood's defects of character were delineated in a few stinging words, which went home. His pride in his courage was bravado, his transparent honesty the garment of a fool, his good nature, his jollity, his enjoyment of life and its good things, the trappings of an empty buffoon and a gross glutton. This great six-footer was nothing but a mixture of ox and

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pig, a brainless beast without one single mental or moral quality to redeem him, or to distinguish him from the rest of his swinish countrymen. As to Northwood's present enterprise, Kada swore volubly that it would end in disaster and disgrace. There were plenty of good Japanese plotting the downfall of the big Englishman. The day would come when Northwood would find himself singularly short of coal when he most wanted it, and his Japanese friends would watch his struggles and laugh at them. Here Kada began to speak thickly; he said something in Japanese, and then fell back in his chair in a sort of fit. A good deal alarmed, Northwood had the Japanese carried on deck by a couple of stewards and handed over to the police guard, who put him into a sampan and sent him on shore to recover his senses.

Kada's wild speech, made under the spur of Russian liquor, was most illuminating to Northwood, while it amazed the Russian officers, most of whom understood English. The first lieutenant said to Northwood: "That Japanese was speaking from his heart, and was talking not only for himself, but for millions of his countrymen who think exactly as he does. We shall have serious trouble with Japan some day!"

The long arm of coincidence is a wonderful thing. It is a fact that the *Ekaterinoslav* was sent to load a cargo of coals at Hokkaido ports in the manner described. It is a historical fact that she was the first ship captured by the Japanese during their war with Russia. According to some accounts, the *Ekaterinoslav* was seized even before the Japanese made their sudden and unexpected attack on Port Arthur. Be that as it may, the *Ekaterinoslav* was overhauled and captured by a Japanese cruiser before her captain or anybody else on board had the slightest idea that a state of war existed.

The morning after the lunch on board the *Ekaterinoslav*, Kada resumed his duties with his usual humility and zeal, but he looked very cheap and exceedingly worried.

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Probably the wretched man was trying to recollect what he might have said in his inspired speech.

Some small quantities of coal were actually shipped next day under the most unpleasant conditions possible. The coolies were always knocking off, and the tallies showed ridiculous discrepancies. The loaders found a subtle enjoyment in flinging baskets of coal dust over bright paint or through cabin doors, and towards evening blows were exchanged between some of the Russian sailors and the Japanese. Hereupon all work was stopped and the police, who had been prowling about the ship all day, made a report, which they sent on shore. Northwood calculated that it would take a month to load the ship at this rate, and that something very serious would happen long before then. He and Kada slept on board, not only by preference, but because the police would not allow them to go on shore.

Next morning at daylight, Northwood was pacing up and down the quarter-deck wondering what the day's work would be like, when two superior police-officers came on board in full uniform, trailing their long swords behind them, and promptly ran up the ladder to the bridge-deck, where they were speedily in altercation with the officer of the watch. Northwood, taking Kada with him, at once joined the group and tried to keep things quiet. The police officers wanted the names of certain Russian sailors accused of assaulting Japanese coolies the previous day. The Russian lieutenant explained that at that early hour Captain Troyan was still asleep in his cabin, but that he would doubtless be on deck very soon and decide as to what he would do in the matter. In the meantime, the police officers must repair to the quarter-deck, the bridges being reserved for those in charge of the ship.

All this Kada translated with many genuflections and eulogies of the quarter-deck as the place of honour; but the Japanese were obdurate. They were on the bridge-deck and intended to remain there. The lieutenant there-

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upon gave a brief order to a gigantic quartermaster, who, comfortably tucking an officer under each arm, bundled them on to the upper deck, ran them down the companion-ladder and pitched them into their boat, which was towing alongside, and cast it off. This was done so smartly, that, though the officers screamed and shouted as they tugged frantically at their swords, they were drifting away with the current before any of the other Japanese on board could interfere.

Once the police officers had their arms free, they stood up in their boat, and drawing their swords, shook them at the Russians, whom they cursed most roundly. Northwood witnessed this unfortunate scene with a sinking heart. Those officers would come back with reinforcements and then there would be trouble of the first magnitude. The patience of the Russians was wearing thin, while the attitude of the Japanese was becoming more provocative and violent every hour. That a collision, with loss of life on both sides, was impending, seemed an absolute certainty, unless something was done immediately. Such an incident in the existing temper of both Russians and Japanese might lead to consequences for which Northwood did not care to be in any way responsible. Not a single coal-lighter had come off to the ship that morning, so that the Japanese had evidently dropped all pretence of carrying out the Hokkaido Company's contract to load her with coal. Dark masses of people lined the shore, and boats were being collected together. Evidently something was brewing.

Just then Captain Troyan stepped briskly along the quarter-deck to greet Northwood, and ask him for the latest news. He heard with characteristic coolness what our hero had to say, and meditated for a moment as Northwood urged him to leave Otaru immediately in order to avoid an open conflict with the Japanese.

Troyan had been watching events very carefully without saying anything, but now the crisis had come he

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was ready for it, and merely remarked: "If you will be responsible for the charter-party, we will leave Otaru immediately. I thought it better to order steam to be kept up in our boilers, so that we can be off as soon as you like."

The responsibility about the charter-party was cheerfully taken over by Northwood. It was merely a question of so much money, which could be settled afterwards. Still, in order to give the business a chance, he arranged with Captain Troyan to go to Mororan to see if it would be possible to complete the charter at that port. He had wired more than once begging Fuji-San to come to Hokkaido at once. Much might be done if Fuji-San would exercise the enormous influence he wielded in the northern island.

In the meantime Northwood ordered Kada to inform the police guard that the *Ekaterinoslav* was leaving for Mororan immediately. The Japanese exhibited the wildest surprise at hearing this unexpected news, and immediately got into their boat, with strict injunctions that the steamer was not to be moved until they returned with their instructions. Kada was sent ashore with them, with telegrams to Mororan and Tokio. Ten minutes later the *Ekaterinoslav* was off to sea and Northwood breathed more freely.

The *Ekaterinoslav*, on arrival at Mororan, was boarded by the police, and Northwood learned from one of the Hokkaido Company's officials that Fuji-San was due that afternoon by the Aomori packet. After some trouble the police allowed Northwood to land, but they would not permit any of the Russians to communicate with the shore.

Northwood had not been very long in his little room in the Japanese inn before he was told that Fuji-San had arrived and wanted to see him. On being ushered into the magnate's presence he was surprised to find him in an exceedingly jovial and hilarious frame of mind, while he

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occasionally hugged a remarkably pretty geisha girl, who squatted on the floor at his side.

"How do?" shouted Fuji-San. "Kiss this pretty girl!" giving her a hearty push in Northwood's direction.

Evidently Fuji-San had been amusing himself by getting drunk on his voyage. Northwood humoured him by admiring the girl, and noticing that she wore the same crest on her kimono as Fuji himself, inquired how they both came to wear the same family badge. Was she his wife?

Fuji laughed uproariously at this. No! his wife was in Tokio with the children, but he dressed his geisha in his wife's kimonos, so as to make her less conspicuous when travelling in his company.

The Englishman thought it carrying matters rather far that Fuji should not only travel with a mistress, but also dress her in his wife's clothes. But with the exception of geishas especially trained and educated for their profession (and these are few in number), the women of Japan have a wretched time of it. They cannot call their bodies or souls their own, and are treated as inferior beings in every class of society.

Presently Fuji-San began to talk more sensibly. He admitted that the situation was serious, but he thought it could be much improved. Certainly Northwood had done well to get the *Ekaterinoslav* away from Otaru. Would he now return to the steamer with an invitation to Captain Troyan and as many of his officers as chose to accompany him to spend the next day at Sapporo, where it was hoped that they would enjoy themselves and see something of the capital of Hokkaido. There was every prospect that the loading of the *Ekaterinoslav* would be resumed the following day.

This was quite good news, and Northwood was really grateful to Fuji for his civil attentions to his Russian friends, who were taken next morning by train to Sapporo,

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where they were suitably entertained at the Hohei Kwan. The better feeling set up by Fuji's influence was but temporary, however. By the time that another thousand tons of coal had been put on board the *Ekaterinoslav*, various Japanese arrived from Otaru, who found but little difficulty in stirring up a strong anti-Russian feeling. Troubles and disputes began to recur, and by the time the ship was but half loaded, Fuji had to confess to Northwood that he found himself quite unable to fulfil his contract, and begged Northwood to send the *Ekaterinoslav* away in order to prevent a violent explosion of popular feeling.

Captain Troyan, who had throughout this affair proved himself to be absolutely just and reasonable in his ideas, volunteered to sail at once for Singapore, leaving Northwood to explain matters to St. Petersburg. That night the *Ekaterinoslav* left Mororan, nor from that day has any ship of the Volunteer Fleet visited a port in the Hokkaido. It may be said at once that the committee of the Volunteer Fleet, so far from penalizing Northwood for not fulfilling the terms of his charter-party, wrote him a letter, in which he was especially thanked for the tact and discretion with which he had met a situation of much difficulty.

During the war Captain Troyan commanded the *Smolensk*, the finest and fastest cruiser of the Volunteer Fleet. The *Smolensk* sank sundry steamers engaged in carrying contraband of war. The captain first heard of the battle of Tsushima and its results from the skipper of a British steamer which he had overhauled, and succeeded in taking the *Smolensk* safely through a fleet of Japanese ships sent to intercept and capture such a valuable prize. Through one of the white fogs which are prevalent off the Hokkaido coast, Captain Troyan could hear the propellers of the ships in pursuit of him churning up the sea, but going dead slow himself until he got clear of his enemies, he steamed into Batavia harbour, and thence he finally reached Cronstadt.

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The *Ekaterinoslav* affair now being a thing of the past, Northwood settled down to the ordinary routine of business, sending one steamer after another southwards laden with Yubari coal. When there was no steamer in port, he had time to look about him and observe some of the characteristics of the country.

The abundance of fish, such as cod, trout and herring, was simply phenomenal. Northwood was frequently offered splendid fish at the rate of a sen—say, a halfpenny—for ten. Not that they were of much use to him when he got them, because the cook of the inn insisted on serving them just warmed through, so that the blood ran out of them when he attempted to eat them. When he made the discovery that even this elementary cookery was done with some very stale pig's fat, scooped out of an old kerosene tin with the dirtiest of unwashed fingers, the young man was tempted to weep over his lost opportunities.

Yetomo, one of the villages of the "Hairy Ainu," was visited during a flying trip. These singular people were once the undisputed masters of the northern island, but they have now become the slaves of the Japanese, and are fast disappearing from the face of the earth. They are an indigenous race, entirely different and physically greatly superior to their conquerors. The men of the Ainu are fine, big, burly fellows, with boldly marked and frequently handsome features well set off with a noble head of hair and a fine bushy beard. Many an Ainu could sit for a portrait of St. Paul, but, alas! there is nothing in those massive and handsome heads. They are miserably indolent and shiftless people, the whole lot of them, who gain a precarious living by trapping wild animals in the depths of the great forests in which the Hokkaido abounds. Their bodies are generally covered with a thick fell, whence their popular designation of the Hairy Ainu. Their women are well featured and comely, albeit they disfigure themselves by tattooing their upper lip a dark blue on arriving at the age of puberty, and again tattooing the

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under lip when they marry. Drink is one of the greatest scourges of the Ainu, but it is said that another cause of their diminishing numbers is the partiality of the Japanese of the Hokkaido for the well-made and comparatively handsome Ainu women who become the concubines of the yellow race in increasing numbers.

At Yetomo Northwood saw a party of hunters, who had just come in from the forests, disposing of their peltries to a knot of Japanese dealers. The negotiations were tedious and protracted beyond all endurance. The Japanese had brought a great quantity of *saki* with them, of which one tub was broached after another. The spirit was of the vilest quality, but the Ainu lapped it up greedily in tin pannikins until they got hopelessly drunk, and were willing to trade everything they had on earth for a few more tubs—and at this point the Japanese closed their deal with the poor devils.

Business having now got into full working order, Northwood saw no reason why he should stay any longer in Japan, and after having made the necessary arrangements with his agents at Yokohama, thankfully moved southwards without delay. As he passed through Shanghai and Hong-Kong he noticed with satisfaction that stocks of coal were getting short at those ports, and that prices must inevitably rise considerably.

Arriving at Singapore after a long absence, he found the position of affairs exactly as he could have wished. The cargoes of coal he had sent were sold as fast as they arrived at large profits, and had greatly strengthened the position of his company, which was now rapidly taking the leading position in the market.

For one whole blessed week Northwood revelled in the comforts of his home, and in his mother's delight at having him back again. But on a Monday morning when Northwood, having driven in from his Ayer Manis estate, happened to be later than usual, Richard Piggott handed him a telegram from Yokohama, advising that there

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had been a rapid advance in the cost of coal, now worth seven yen per ton, and that the Japanese Company had notified Northwood's agents that they considered their contract cancelled, and absolutely refused to ship another pound of coal under it.

This was something like trouble! Northwood had sold ahead and must have his coal. He remembered Kada's speech at Otaru and now understood what it really meant. The fates had been too kind! He wanted a rising market, but he certainly did not want prices to bound up to more than one hundred per cent. of his contract rate before he had got delivery of more than one-fourth of his huge purchases.

After a moment of consideration, Northwood despatched a telegram to his bankers at Yokohama, instructing them to stop payment of all drafts in favour of the Japanese Company, and then mentioned to his chief that he intended leaving again for Japan by the next steamer.

The next day Northwood was a passenger on board of a P. and O. mail-boat, speeding his way towards China and Japan in a sufficiently chastened frame of mind. He had some strong points in his favour, but the situation was one of doubt and anxiety from which he could scarce hope to emerge without serious sacrifices. He felt that his courage and endurance were about to be put to a very severe test.

Passing through Hong-Kong and Shanghai once more, he learned that the coal market was in something like a state of panic, and that prices were rising with a rapidity of which he had no previous experience.

At Yokohama his first business, after a hasty consultation with his agents, was to call on his bankers. Here a singular and almost incredible phenomenon was disclosed to him. While the Japanese Company had gone back on their contract and stopped their shipments, they had made no application whatever for payment.

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Northwood had left Japan owing them large sums of money, which had been increased by several cargoes sent away before the contract was suspended. A hasty calculation showed that at the moment he was indebted to the Japanese to the extent of over one hundred thousand yen.

Fuji-San and his colleagues, with the characteristic distrust of his race, had insisted on accounts being settled on dock certificates only, as they were terribly afraid of their British clients cheating them in the weights of their cargoes. The Yokohama bankers having told Fuji-San that the company represented by Northwood was good for a million yen, or, if needs be, two million, the Japanese had no doubts about their solvency ; but as the coal trade notoriously lends itself to wholesale cheating in weights, they had invented a truly Chinese system of checks and guarantees, which Northwood saw, to his great relief, would long delay payments, and thus give him his best protection against unfair treatment. Still, there were a number of certificates duly signed for payment in Yokohama which had never been presented. What did it all mean ?

Northwood sent a messenger by the next train to Tokio with a very polite letter informing his Japanese friends that he would have the pleasure of visiting them the next morning to discuss certain matters of business. He got to the Tokio station early enough next day, but although he had stated his train in his letter, there was no one to meet him this time. Naturally there was no triumphal procession of rikshas, and he shrewdly surmised that there would be no theatre parties or other festivities provided for his entertainment. Getting into a riksha, he jolted his solitary way to the company's head office. On arrival there he was kept waiting for over an hour in a dusty and unwashed hole of a waiting-room, while sundry unmannerly Japanese, who ended by laughing at him to his face, asked him rudely why he wanted to see

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Fuji-San. Did he not know that Fuji-San always had important engagements? If he had come from Singapore, why didn't he go back to Singapore?

At last he could stand it no longer. He knew the way to Fuji's private room well enough, and simply walked into it unannounced. The great man started and scowled evilly as he saw his visitor, and asked him with an ill grace what he wanted. Northwood was to get no more coals from the Hokkaido, he said. He was a bad man, a very bad man, who had got Fuji to sign a contract he did not understand. He had cheated the Japanese badly enough already, and they would have nothing more to do with him.

It was no use to urge that the Japanese had written out the contract with his own hand; and at last, Fuji, as though finding Northwood a bore, began to read his newspaper and to pick his teeth with much ostentation. Northwood took up his hat and said: "Good-bye, Fuji-San. I must have coal, so I suppose there is nothing for it but to go south and buy Moji coal."

"Oh, yes!" responded Fuji indifferently. "Plenty coal at Moji. Good-bye."

"All right!" continued Northwood with equal calm. "I will start for Moji to-night. By the way, I quite forgot to ask you why you never cashed my certificates already sent to you, or why you have not wanted certificates for the last six cargoes shipped. I owe you at least one hundred thousand yen, which I shall, of course, keep to settle differences at Moji. I am all right and I suppose you are satisfied. Good-bye, Fuji-San."

So saying, Northwood left the room and started for the staircase. But Fuji had dropped his newspaper and was after him with surprising agility.

"What you say?" he screamed. "Come back, Nortood-San, and we talk!"

They *did* talk, and Fuji was painfully interested this time. Two other directors had stepped in to discuss the

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situation, and a nice noise they all made over it. At last they adjourned to an inner room, from which noises as of a free fight presently proceeded. As some unearthly yells rent the air, Northwood took the liberty of having a look at the very interesting proceedings inside. He found himself in the book-keeper's department. The book-keeper himself was on the floor together with some overturned furniture, while three of his directors were knocking him about with considerable energy and ability. Fuji, in particular, was landing him sundry punches on the stomach which evidently stimulated the yells that had attracted Northwood to the spot. Lying on the floor, also, and scattered about in different directions, were half a dozen of the familiar Tanjong Pagar Dock Company's coal certificates, all duly stamped and signed, and made payable on demand for various amounts to the order of the Japanese Company. Had they been presented at the Yokohama branch of the Hong-Kong and Shanghai Bank in due course, they would have been paid at once. Equally as a matter of course, the payment of these certificates was now stopped.

It was now clear to Northwood that the bookkeeper, who had never understood the nature of these certificates, had simply pigeon-holed instead of cashing them. Hence the present awful row. Northwood had lots in hand, besides the value of the certificates on the floor, but, of course, the more he owed the Japanese the more it improved his position.

The three directors, having drubbed their wretched bookkeeper until they were hot and blown, now seized upon Northwood and dragged him into Fuji's room. Here they started an animated debate with him about new terms, and finally they all adjourned to a fashionable tea-house, where Northwood was once more regaled in the old style. Fuji was again roaring with laughter at his own jokes and claiming our hero as his best friend.

After two or three days' hard fighting the Englishman

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succeeded in getting to windward of the Japanese and convincing them that they would have to accept his terms. He made them some trifling concessions, which he could afford a dozen times over, and nailed them down to hard and fast terms secured by the large sum he owed them. Nothing would induce him to part with a penny of this money until, as he expressed it, the last spoonful of coal had been shipped to his satisfaction. The entire sum was invested in a separate account at the bank, to lie at interest for the benefit of the Japanese Company until Northwood released it and allowed them to have the lot. He further advised his discomfited friends that he was going back to the Hokkaido and would remain there until the contract was completed.

Taking Kada with him, Northwood once more got into the weary train for Aomori, and on reaching Mororan, took up his quarters in the dirty old inn of the place. There was a lot of hard tramping and rowing about in boats to inspect stocks of coals and weights. It was a very rough life, which soon took off any superfluous flesh which Northwood had about him. He got as thin as a rail and as fit as a fiddle. However comfortless and squalid his existence might be, it suited his health admirably. The winter was now coming on, and the raw cold weather of Mororan made matters considerably worse in an inn devoid of any heating apparatus except portable little copper boxes filled with charcoal. The Japanese kept themselves warm by the simple plan of putting on one suit of clothes over another as the cold increased—as is done also by the Chinese; but this is a device to which European dress does not lend itself.

For a short time Northwood had the society of Mr. Falstaff, sent to the Hokkaido by the Yokohama agents, with the idea of assisting him with his work. Falstaff was a very stout, ruddy gentleman, of a most genial disposition, but was so accustomed to the luxury of his well-appointed home on the Bluff at Yokohama, that the

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sudden change to the beastliness of the inn at Mororan was nothing short of a horror to him.

What to drink was always a question with them, as the available supply of water was particularly open to pollution. The ill-fated pair drank Sapporo beer until they got as yellow as crocuses and had to give it up. Then they tried weak tea and whisky, an idea of Falstaff's. But Japanese green tea, although a very pretty, pale colour in the cup, is really very strong indeed, nor does it seem to blend well with whisky. After a few days on green tea and whisky, the unfortunate men got nerves like fiddle-strings, and any unexpected noise made them jump. So this beverage also had to be condemned. They finally hit upon boiled water and whisky made very weak, as being the best in the circumstances, and managed to get along pretty well on this tippie, although it did not taste very good.

The evenings were very trying. The whole village was generally wrapped in sea fog and sticky with moisture. Chill draughts blew in throughout the ramshackle inn and made it horribly uncomfortable. Northwood and Falstaff crouched on the floor over a wretched little brazier, called by the Japanese *hibashi*, in a vain effort to warm themselves. One extra cold evening Falstaff got the landlord to put half a dozen *hibashi* into their little den. They certainly made the room a bit warmer, but Northwood, feeling rather giddy and queer, had a look at his fat friend and to his consternation found him getting blue in the face. The fumes from these infernal *hibashi* were asphyxiating them.

Northwood was able to get to his feet, push aside the sliding doors, and call for assistance. An abundant admission of sea fog cleared away the charcoal fumes before they did any further mischief, but poor Falstaff contracted a frightful cold, which took a solid grip of him and made him very ill. Northwood was soon convinced that Falstaff would be a desperate failure as a thin man,

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and persuaded his worthy friend to return to Yokohama and its flesh-pots without delay.

So our hero was left once more to pull through without the doubtful assistance of Kada. He had what he thought a splendid time of it when a steamer came to Mororan to load a cargo of coals, and he could get some food and rest on board ; but his joy can be imagined when the very last ship anchored in the bay that he would be asked to despatch. That good steamship the *Austria* was loaded one day, the whole of the big contract was at length completed, and Northwood was free to leave the island of Hokkaido with a clear conscience.

He returned to Tokio and settled with Fuji-San up to the last yen, and tied him down once more to confine his shipments of coal to Singapore to the Golconda Company exclusively. An incident, which proved in the end of an entirely agreeable nature, delayed Northwood's departure from Japan, and afforded him a new and attractive experience of the country.

More than one attempt had been made by competing interests to check Northwood's progress in Japan, and to break up the monopoly he had established in northern coal ; but these attacks had never been pushed home, and had, as a matter of fact, given him more anxiety than actual trouble. But now he got private and detailed information of unmistakable accuracy, that Mr. X, of the great Singapore firm of X Y Z and Co., was leaving for Japan to beat up his quarters. This was cold news, for Northwood knew perfectly well that the house of X Y Z and Co. was immensely wealthy, and that X himself, the clever son of a clever father, was a man of great determination and resource. Moreover, X Y Z and Co. were intimately connected with the leading steamship company of Japan, and had powerful connections in the country.

The more Northwood studied the outlook, the less he liked it. He had, indeed, to all appearances, made his position unassailable on paper, but what did that mean

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in a country like Japan? What sort of a fight could he, a mere clerk, liable to be disavowed at any moment by a local manager who hated him, put up against Mr. X, a notoriously wealthy man, who was absolutely his own master? Northwood decided that he would await X's arrival in Japan and do his utmost to hold the position won with so much difficulty.

Persuaded that Mr. X would take rooms in the Grand Hotel at Yokohama, Northwood made it his own roost the day before the Empress steamer arrived. When X and his baggage got to the Grand Hotel, Northwood was the first to greet him.

"I heard you were coming to Yokohama," he said, "and am delighted to see you!"

X responded in the same cordial tone, and hoped that Northwood would breakfast with him. After a pleasant meal, discussed with much appetite, X begged Northwood to excuse him as he had to attend to business of some importance. Northwood seized upon this opening at once. Clearly and briefly he placed the whole case before X, and showed him that the Golconda position was absolutely unassailable, unless certain Japanese were induced to break their most formal engagements and act with flagrant dishonesty. He appealed to X to leave him in possession of what had been won with so much trouble and difficulty. In the other event, Northwood warned X that he would fight him to the bitter end, and that his especial experience of this particular trade would give him great advantages. A struggle would mean a big loss to both sides, and should be avoided if possible.

X did not appear to be particularly pleased with Northwood's attitude, but he took everything very coolly and contented himself with remarking that he would consult his agents and come to a decision speedily.

At lunch-time X returned to the hotel, looking a little tired, but he told Northwood that he had decided not to interfere with him in any way. A little later he remarked

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that, since he had come to Japan, he might as well see some of the lakes and mountains, and thought of making a start for Myanoshita by that afternoon's train.

Northwood, who had determined not to lose sight of X while his formidable friend was in Japan, said that he was particularly fond of lake and mountain scenery, and suggested that they might make the tour together.

X agreed that it would certainly be better fun than travelling alone, and it ended in the two men starting on a holiday together by the next train.

To Northwood this journey was pure enjoyment. Myanoshita was a charming place, Nikko a paradise of delights. How beautiful was Chuzenji and how majestic Nantaizan! Some of the most fascinating scenery in existence was enhanced by a dreamy sense of well-being and of bliss. Such inns as Naraya's, or Kanaya's, with their winding verandahs and staircases, their blaze of flowers, and their spotless cleanliness were perfectly delicious. How kind and attentive were the Japanese landlords, and what words shall do justice to the childish charms of the little Japanese waitresses, so fussily anxious that their foreign guests should make a really good breakfast, and be comfortable in every possible way.

There is always a touch of the theatrical about everything Japanese, including the climate and scenery of the country. Some of the prettiest bits suggest opera comique. At times Northwood felt as though he had wandered into a glorified pantomime, in which he was somehow taking a leading part. A hillside covered with a superb display of azaleas in bloom, with a temple here and a tea-house there, and dotted with tiny groups of Japanese damsels clad in the gayest tints, beneath an exceedingly bright blue sky bathed in golden sunshine, did not seem natural. There was, too, a singularly sharp sense of definition about the landscape, suggesting that it was seen through opera-glasses. The whole thing was like a triumph of the scene-painter's art rather than actual Nature.

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Such were the impressions made on Northwood's senses by the show places of Japan. He now understood perfectly well why thousands of delighted tourists united in a chorus of extravagant praise of Japan and the Japanese.

Northwood returned to Yokohama, much gratified at having seen so much of the Golden Road of Japan, and saw X off by his steamer with a feeling of relief, albeit he had enjoyed his society very much indeed. He was glad that this giant of the tragedy of commerce was off the boards and had taken his thunderbolts with him. Not a word about business had been exchanged between the two men during their long trip through fairyland. X, the man who had inherited one fortune, made another, and kept both, was on terms of perfect equality with Northwood, the shipping clerk, who had squandered his patrimony and whose fortune was not exactly his face, but his confounded cheek!

"Good-bye, Northwood," were the farewell words of X, "and good luck! By the way, if ever you get tired of the Golconda Company let us know, and I think we shall be able to offer you good terms."

Then Northwood knew that X was fully alive to the fact that he had been watched from the moment he set foot in Japan to the moment he left it, and in nowise resented it.

Northwood was now free to do as he listed, and lost no time in getting back to Singapore. He left Japan contented with an undeniable success, won through sheer toil and pluck. It had been a singularly trying campaign for both mind and body, which left a sense of weariness and depression behind it, despite the victory with which it closed. Still, he knew that he would soon recover himself, and be in readiness for the next emergency.

As he paced the quarter-deck of the mail-boat which was taking him southwards, Northwood often thought of Japan and the Japanese. What a strange country, and what a strange people! The analysis of Japanese

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character baffled him completely. Of ability and courage it appeared to him that the Japanese have more than their share. But that as a nation they are cruel, vindictive, unscrupulous and licentious, dominated by insatiable ambitions and by a pride intolerable to men of other nations, appeared to him to be equally clear.

He had seen Japanese women toiling in the fields, working naked in coal mines, and loading coals on foreign steamers. He had seen them carrying bricks, and he had seen them in the Yoshiwara of Tokio. In conversation with a Japanese gentleman who had been educated in America (and thanks to whom Northwood had seen one or two Japanese ladies), the question was raised about the position of women in Japan, and more especially women of good family.

"Oh!" said the Japanese gentleman, "we tried the European system with some of our women when the French influence was in the ascendant some years ago, and found that it did not work well. Our women are best as they are."

Northwood pondered over such problems as the savage murder of a whole family at Sapporo by a discarded suitor for the hand of the daughter of the house. The disappointed lover, after slaying the girl, her parents, and even the very servants of the establishment, very handsomely committed suicide. Public sympathy seemed to be entirely with the heart-broken swain. The spirit of the Forty-seven Ronins is far from dead in Japan.

After the disastrous floods in the Aomori district, public excitement waxed high over the conduct of a certain schoolmaster who had left his wife to drown in order that he might convey a portrait of his Emperor to a place of safety. Many and fervid were the eulogies publicly addressed to the patriotic schoolmaster.

As for Japanese dishonesty in business matters, any foreign trader can sufficiently enlighten the inquirer if he has the courage to do so. It is notorious. The intoler-

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ance of foreigners and foreign trade has increased visibly since the war with Russia. The spirit of Kada is now abroad with a vengeance, as foreigners in Japan know to their cost.

After all, it may be argued that the recent successes of the Japanese Empire are based on a political crime—the murder of the Korean Empress by the order of the Japanese Minister at Seoul. Had the Empress not been murdered, the Emperor would not have taken refuge at the Russian Legation. Russia would not have been led into her disastrous policy of acquiring a dominant influence in Korea and concessions on the Yalu. There would have been no war. There would have been no triumph of Japan, and no disturbance of the balance of power in Europe. The British, in their wisdom, have chosen to ally themselves with an Asiatic race, driven into such a partnership, it would appear, by terror of Russia. The first fruits of this singular alliance are now coming into the market. The Japanese are punishing British trade in the Far East with relentless severity, private enterprise with this end in view being subsidized directly or indirectly by Government. British traders in Japan are being daily made more uncomfortable, and sinister rumours are now being heard about Japanese influences working to our peril in British India.

We no longer fear the might of Russia, and now that it is too late, we realize the fact that the Government of the Tsar does not, and never did, want India. We are confronted with another and more active Power, building battleships with disquieting celerity since the defeat of Russia has cleared the board of a mighty factor, which has more than once been exercised in the interests of European peace. The last great war was calamitous for Russia; it has not been a good thing for Great Britain; and in years to come Japan may find her triumph costly and perilous.

Of the greatness of Japan in war and peace there is

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now no need to write. This has been done in countless thousands of pages and columns all over the world. In fact, the world has been somewhat surfeited with tales of the perfections of a race to which are credited, with more enthusiasm than discernment, superhuman valour and wisdom. Perchance some wholesome criticism of Japan from a purely British point of view may not be out of place to-day.

The Japanese have been exceedingly clever in presenting their own version of affairs to the rest of the world, and in keeping unwelcome and unsightly details to themselves. It is now getting more generally known, perhaps, that the armies of Japan were more than once on the verge of disaster in Manchuria.

It might have been better for the future peace of the world if Russia had not been hurried into signing the Peace of Portsmouth by the internal condition of the empire. A prolongation of the war would, in the opinion of many Russians competent to form an opinion, have resulted in the exhaustion and defeat of Japan.

CHAPTER XXXV

OF SOME REMARKABLE EVENTS IN THE KINGDOM OF SIAM AND THE NETHERLANDS INDIES

SUCH interesting incidents in the history of the Far East as the French attack on the capital of Siam, and the disastrous defeat and ultimate victory of the Dutch army in the island of Lombok, probably passed unheeded at the time of their occurrence, and must, in any case, be largely forgotten by this time. Unfortunately, but scant justice can be done in these pages to some of the most picturesque fighting of recent years.

It had long been an idea of our hero to establish a private line of chartered steamers between Singapore and Bangkok, in order that business between the two ports might be conducted on something like natural lines—that is to say, independently of the monopolists who were making things very difficult for all not within the ring.

On arriving at Bangkok with this end in view, Northwood found the whole trade of the place at a standstill. The natives were bringing little or no paddy in from the interior; steamers were lying idle in the river, and the wildest rumours were current of war and revolution.

Northwood admired the magnificent establishment of the Golconda Company in Bangkok, and the splendid position which it had acquired in Siam. Their local manager, Mr. Charles Stuart, was a man of tremendous energy, and his entire staff worked like demons from early morn until late at night.

Although Northwood was a bit of a nigger-driver himself,

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he thought the strain put upon his colleagues at Bangkok excessive, but, as might be expected, very handsome profits were the result.

Northwood's previous experience in Indo-China now afforded him a singular insight into the state of affairs in Siam. Matters had long been very strained between the French Republic and the Kingdom of Siam, owing to all sorts of intricate boundary questions, the registration of Siamese as French subjects, and other grievances. Northwood remembered that when he was last in Saigon, the impending annexation of Siam was talked about very freely, and one enthusiastic official told him that as soon as the French flag floated over Bangkok all foreign companies in Siam would be compelled to surrender their docks, wharves, teak forests, etc., to French subjects in exchange for such compensation as might be offered.

The existing tension in Siam was evidently due to the workings of French policy; it would be of the highest interest to find out the actual state of affairs, and how far the French intended to go with the Siamese. With this idea, Northwood made himself a frequent visitor at the French Consulate, where he was always welcome, and he also saw a good deal of M. Pavie, the French Minister; but he got precious little information of any kind out of this diplomatic gentleman. There was, however, a third person, both attractive and enigmatic, whom Northwood studied to some purpose. This was M. Kœchlin-Schwartz, who represented Mulhouse in the French Chamber of Deputies, and appeared to be in Siam on some diplomatic or quasi-diplomatic mission. Siam is hardly the country which an old gentleman, stricken in years, but full of wisdom, would visit in pursuit of either health or pleasure.

It so happened that a big stern-wheeler belonging to the Golconda Company was about to be sent up the Menam as far as Ayuthia, the ancient capital of Siam. Stuart having suggested that it would be an interesting

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trip, and that he could have the entire boat to himself if he liked, Northwood was naturally delighted to avail himself of such an opportunity. At the last moment it occurred to him to invite Kœchlin-Schwartz to go with him. The Frenchman fell in with the idea at once, and the two started on what proved to be a singularly pleasant voyage. The two men visited the royal palace at Bang-pa-in and admired the gorgeousness thereof, and later they gazed on the ruins of Ayuthia and on its many shattered temples. Nothing of any unusual nature happened, until by some chance the conversation at last turned on Siamese politics. Departing from his usual reserve, Kœchlin-Schwartz remarked somewhat testily that Siamese audacity and insolence had now become past all endurance, and that France would soon be compelled to put an end to an intolerable situation. He added that the Siamese Government would not dare to assume its present provocative attitude to France, but for the support of some foreign Power. No doubt Great Britain was at the bottom of the whole trouble and was prompting Siam to defy France openly.

This was more than Northwood could stand. He pointed out that the Siamese Government had many cruel grievances against France, which would easily explain their restiveness without any foreign prompting. Siam appeared to be in a fair way to become a vassal state in which the French could do exactly as they pleased.

"Ah! So that is what you Englishmen think!" rejoined the other. "I can tell you one thing, and that is we are absolutely tired of Siamese evasiveness and impertinence. Your friends are about to be taught a lesson they will not soon forget. In a few weeks more their king will be either a prisoner in our hands or a fugitive, and the French colours will float over the Siamese capital!"

Kœchlin-Schwartz then turned the conversation naturally and without the slightest effort into some other channel, but the bolt had been sped, and hit its mark.

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Northwood at last had got the information he wanted. No sooner had he returned to Bangkok than he eagerly impressed upon Stuart the vital importance of the news he had brought back with him from Ayuthia, but he was laughed to scorn. Was a fellow who had been but a few days in Siam to know the hidden secrets of its tortuous policy better than men who had spent their lives in trying to understand the country?

Northwood stuck doggedly to his point and was not to be deterred. He insisted that he understood the French point of view in any case, and *that* happened to be of importance just now. Did he not know something of Indo-China? Why should he not be of use in Siam at the present juncture. Finally he made a strong appeal to Stuart, who had access to the palace, to try to discover if there was any confirmation to be found of his tidings amongst the Siamese themselves. This Stuart consented to do, but whatever he discovered at the palace or elsewhere he kept to himself. It soon became noticeable, however, that there was a sudden and complete change in his policy. He transferred or cancelled all sorts of contracts, and re-chartered the whole of his tonnage to his neighbours at varying losses. He was taking in sail and preparing for the storm.

At this juncture, Northwood, having fulfilled his mission in Siam, had to return to Singapore. He had no idea on what lines the French attack on Siam would run. He thought that the French might seize the big island of Koh-si-chang, off the mouth of the Menam, and blockade Bangkok, or that they might send an army over their border and invade Siam from that quarter. But it never entered his head that they would be mad enough to attack Bangkok in the face of its fortifications, a fleet and an army officered by Europeans, with two small gunboats and a rickety little merchant steamer. But that is precisely what the French did—with infinite pluck and astonishing success.

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The Siamese seemed to have a pretty fair idea of the intentions of their French neighbours, and set to work overhauling the Paknam forts, which were mounted with heavy Armstrong guns, and mining the Bangkok bar, which is very shallow, having little more than thirteen feet of water on it at the best of times.

The French made their attack with great skill and determination, and, it must be said, with a tremendous run of luck on their side upon which they had no earthly right to reckon. The Siamese, who ought to have wiped the little expedition out of existence, put up a most lamentable defence. The Paknam forts blazed away with immense vigour, mines were exploded continually in the shallow waters of that frightfully perilous bar, batteries of artillery and endless rifles fired incessantly, but in the incompetent hands of the Siamese their costly armaments did but little harm to the enemy. True, a shell struck the little merchant steamer piloting the two gunboats, and the vessel had to be run ashore to prevent her from sinking. The French *Inconstant* and the *Comète* had one or two exceedingly narrow escapes on the bar from mines exploded either a few seconds too soon or too late, but escaped any serious injury, and crossed into deep water safely and both steamed up the river, while the defenders bolted in all directions in the wildest panic. The Siamese navy proved to be utterly worthless in the hour of trial, nor was the Siamese army any better.

When the two little gunboats, proudly flying the tricolour of France, anchored off the palace, the king and his court had fled to Bang-pa-in ! The commander of the *Inconstant* wished to land a part of his diminutive force and to take possession of the palace and its treasures, but he was not allowed to do so, although the Siamese would not have offered the slightest resistance to the French.

What took place at this point of the story belongs more or less to the region of mystery. It is rumoured that M. Pavie, the French Minister, prevented the commander

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of the *Comète* from landing his men. Perhaps the Minister had instructions from Paris, possibly Kœchlin-Schwartz may have thought it wise not to proceed to extremities. Anyhow, the French sailors were kept on board their vessels, to their boundless indignation.

The widespread masses of buildings known as the palace contain, or are supposed to contain, immense treasures. A canny Scotsman who had spent most of his life in Siam told Northwood that he estimated the personal revenue of the king at some two millions sterling per annum, of which he calculated that His Majesty spent about one-half, the remaining million being converted into gold and added to many other millions carefully piled up for many long years past within the walls of the palace. Here there was something like loot for the bluejackets on board the gunboats, to say nothing of a profusion of diamonds and other jewels, gold plate and other valuables, all lying about just waiting to be lifted by strong and willing hands.

The Siamese were astonished out of their seven senses when the French notified them that they now demanded an indemnity of a million francs to defray the cost of their expedition and would hold the province of Chantaboon as security for its payment. A million francs! They offered the paltry sum immediately. They could have paid this indemnity a hundred times over quite easily. The French took their money and occupied Chantaboon also. Probably it was discovered later that this province was a useless and even costly possession for France to hold, for it has now been handed back to Siam. The management of this whole business by the French seems open to the sharpest criticism. An attack, rash to the verge of madness, was completely successful—thanks to the wonderful skill and courage of the men who carried it out; but once this bold operation had struck terror into the Siamese, the subsequent handling of the situation was weak, inconsequent and unworthy.

All's well that ends well, however. The Siamese

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question, which at one time threatened the peace of Europe, now appears to be settled to everybody's satisfaction. France has "rectified her boundaries" considerably at the expense of Siam, and Frenchmen no longer talk of including the whole kingdom in their vast Indo-Chinese empire. Some magnificent provinces in the Malay Peninsula, nominally under the suzerainty of Siam, have now been placed under British influence, and cannot fail to become possessions of increasing value. As for Siam herself, the friends of that country cannot but be gratified with the notable progress which it is now making. Free from all external pressure, she is able to develop her resources, and she has greatly consolidated her position by surrendering territories which, far from being of any use, were a constant source of trouble and complications of all sorts.

Business next called Northwood to Java, where the country, in direct contrast to Siam, is so superbly delightful that the most careless of men must be enraptured by the glorious visions which are thrown open to his gaze in profusion.

Northwood left Singapore in the Dutch packet *Graf van Bylandt*, an old-fashioned but very clean and comfortable vessel, on board of which the table was liberal to excess and everybody kind and courteous.

The *Graf* went some distance out of her usual course to call at Muntok for a Dutch gentleman, who must have been a person of some importance. Muntok is a sweetly pretty place protected by an ancient fort of ineffable quaintness, and bathed in a delicious atmosphere of langour and sleepiness. The Dutchman for whom the voyage to Muntok had been made, must have felt particularly languid and sleepy that day, because he simply sent word that he was not coming on board, whereupon the mail-boat went to sea again.

Batavia was reached in due course, and after spending some days in the transaction of business, Northwood left



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by the railway for the interior. His route lay through Bandong and Garoet, from which latter place he made an ascent of the Papandayan. Starting from a village at the foot of the mountain on a fine little horse, Northwood rode past gardens and plantations, over beautifully shaded slopes adorned by masses of palms, ferns, and orchids, and many a sparkling rill, until the ascent got too steep for riding and he had to climb on foot through a scene which was fast becoming stony and desolate. The rugged path was now bordered by great rocks blackened by the action of fire and powdered with sulphur. The streams in this region are boiling hot.

Here Northwood saw an excessively corpulent Dutchman being carried up the mountain in a machine called a "tandoek," a platform on poles covered by a canopy. The heavy Dutchman, seated in an armchair fastened down to the platform, placidly smoked a cigar, while a dozen unhappy natives sweated with cruelly-galled shoulders beneath their wooden poles.

Finally the crater was reached after a very stiff climb. It is of vast extent and is a scene of sinister horror. Furious jets of steam roar through fissures in the rocks with a deafening sound, while below the drear wastes of lava the noise of raging streams in violent ebullition produces an uncanny effect, considerably enhanced by the unearthly appearance of fountains of boiling mud.

The place did not look at all safe, but the native guides seemed to know their way about the crater perfectly well. One of them collected some sulphur which was almost too hot to be touched. Climbing a peak which overhung the crater, Northwood had a magnificent view of mists and cloudland and of miles of the shining and fertile plains below.

Leaving Garoet, and taking Maos and Djokjakarta on his route, Northwood had an opportunity of admiring the sculptured magnificence of Boero Bodor, a gigantic pile of ruins built by a Buddhist race vanished many long

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centuries since. The Javanese of to-day are Mohammedans.

Finally he got to the city and seaport of Sourabaya, anything but beautiful. Absolutely flat, and intersected by filthy canals, this uninviting place was afflicted with a temperature which stood at over one hundred degrees in the shade, and a violent outbreak of cholera. Corpses were carried through the streets day and night in hundreds, in never-ending procession. Business detained him in Sourabaya for several days, and he had just about finished his task, when one night he developed what he thought might be choleraic symptoms. He sent for the worthy proprietor of the Embong Malang Hotel, who carefully filled him up with brandy and cordially advised him to take the next train for the mountains. Providentially there was a train at five a.m. which landed him at Passaroean at ten p.m. Here he got a carriage which drove him over a splendid road to Poespo, at which point he was provided with a stout hill pony, and getting into the saddle, rode through some lovely mountainous country to Tosari, where he put up late in the afternoon at a queer kind of hotel, consisting chiefly of bamboo huts built round a yard.

Northwood had been travelling on the up grade the whole day, and by the time he got to Tosari the thermometer had fallen to forty degrees. He slept thankfully between blankets that night, and all his unpleasant symptoms disappeared with his singularly sudden transition to a cool climate.

Northwood was off at daylight on a stout horse to ascend the Bromo. The famous Bromo and its wonderful Sand Sea form one of the marvels of the world. Riding through a most lovely and varied country for some miles, Northwood presently dismounted and, scrambling up a peak, got a full view of them. The dull roar of the volcano is heard for miles away, just as the vast and wonderfully shapely masses of smoke and vapour thrown up from its



THE BRONCO AND A PEEP OF THE SAND SEA.

[Facing p. 312

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cone are visible at great distances. From the peak Northwood beheld a wondrous sight, a vast level plain of black volcanic sand, extending for miles, and surrounded by mountains on every side. From the centre of this mighty and extraordinary expanse rises Gunong Bato.

Remounting his horse, Northwood rode across the Sand Sea, on which armies might manœuvre. It is ribbed by the action of the winds, just as the real sands of the sea are ribbed by the tides. Skirting the base of Gunong Bato, his horse carried him very pluckily over the lower slopes, a scene of the most awful desolation. Presently the dark, rugged slopes became too much for any horse, and Northwood, again dismounting, pursued his way on foot, over black sand and mud strewn with lava, until he reached a good way up the truncated and serrated cone which the natives call Gunong Bato. The foothold near the summit is so bad that the ascent is continued up rough ladders pegged into the slope of the crater. Without these ladders progress over the smooth, shifting surface would be difficult indeed. Finally he gained the lip of the crater and looked down into its interior, a sheer fiery hell. Great masses of molten lava boiled up in huge red waves, while tongues of flame licked the interior of the crater, which is very symmetrical and shaped like an inverted cone. A tremendous column of steam shot up into the air with a terrible roar. Drifts of vapour charged with acrid fumes occasionally enveloped Northwood and his guides. Magnificent as it was, it was something of a relief to get away from this awful place.

The Bromo is naturally the object of certain superstitious observances, and at times the natives assemble in great numbers and fling into its flaming crater propitiatory offerings of goats, fowls, fruits and money. Time was when youths and virgins were thrown into the fiery abyss to appease the spirits of the mountain, but the Dutch have naturally put an end to human sacrifices.

The height of this mountain is about eight thousand

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feet. Northwood admired the magnificent masses of Ardjoeno, over eleven thousand feet in height, but had no time in which to make its ascent. Passing again through Passaroean, he enjoyed the spectacle of its lovely avenues and lordly mansions. But, alas! the glory of Passaroean has departed. Beetroot has done much to kill sugar-cane, and the planters of old, who revelled in ample wealth, are now no more, so that a marble mansion can be rented for a song. A placid Dutch shopkeeper explained to Northwood that Passaroean had gone bodily and for ever to the devil, in support of which statement he mentioned that he was paying the nominal rent of seven guilders per month for the very comfortable brick building in which he had his shop and his home. A poor man with luxurious tastes might do much worse than take up his residence in one of the beauty spots of Java. Rent, servants, and food can all be had phenomenally cheap in a country where a man can pick out his own climate. The coffee-planters, their wives and children, are often as sturdy and rosy-cheeked as any people to be found in Europe. To the traveller, every inducement is offered by the splendid roads of Java, the admirable system of hiring horses and carriages, and the clean, comfortable *pasangrahans*, or rest-houses, and many other facilities. The Javanese themselves are the nicest natives possible.

To think that Java, this vast and invaluable possession, peopled to-day by close upon thirty millions of fine natives, was once ours, and that we flung it away as not worth having!

Northwood left Sourabaya for Macassar, where he took passage by the Dutch steamer *Tambora*. This he found just as comfortable and pleasant a ship as the *Graf van Bylandt*. He was actually the only passenger on board of this fine mail-boat. As the shores of Celebes faded from view, Northwood thought yet once more of this mighty and still mysterious island belonging to the Dutch, who have not even yet explored its



A VIEW IN THE CELEBES.

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ANGOTLIAO

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interior. If it belonged to us how different things would be!

The *Tambora* next arrived at Sandalwood Island, in the Flores Sea, the only island in the whole archipelago, apparently, which is not beautiful. The natives have the reputation of being a beastly lot and exceedingly treacherous. Northwood landed at Nangamessie—a dirty, wretched village amid sandy and wholly unattractive surroundings. Entering into conversation with a hang-dog sort of native, who carried a spear in each hand, and who was doubtless the melancholy scoundrel he appeared to be, Northwood learned to his surprise that an *orang puteh* (a white man) was living at Nangamessie. When he was assured that the white man was an *orang ingris* (an Englishman), Northwood's curiosity knew no bounds, and he at once started in search of his countryman.

Surely enough, he espied the motionless figure of a white man, who, seeing him moving rapidly towards him, suddenly took to his heels and bolted for the scrub. He ran very lame, however, and was soon overtaken by his pursuer. Northwood suddenly recognized in the fugitive his sometime friend, Mr. A. H. Everett, and hailed him enthusiastically by name.

"Oh! it's you, is it?" said Everett. "I thought it was some blessed Dutchman wanting to bother me!"

He led the way to his hut, and explained that he was busy making a collection of birds'-skins. He had a few natives at work preparing specimens. Northwood implored Everett to come off to the *Tambora* and at least have a comfortable dinner and a long talk about things, but his invitation was unconditionally refused. Everett had not seen a white man, a letter, or a newspaper for over two years. He had hurt his leg by slipping on some rocks and getting a bad fall, which had lamed him permanently. He did not want books or cartridges or anything else.

Suddenly turning round, however, he said: "Well,

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what has been going on these last two years? I haven't got the slightest idea. Tell me what has happened all this time."

Oddly enough, Northwood found it a matter of no small difficulty to pump up at a moment's notice the history of the last two years. Really very little of much importance appeared to have occurred during that period. Happily it turned out that what was really wanted was news of progress in Borneo, and this was supplied in abundance. Northwood was sincerely concerned to bid farewell to his friend amidst such uninviting and dangerous surroundings, but Everett, of whom some misanthropic twist had got the mastery, insisted on being left to his fate, nor would he accept the slightest gift which might make his voluntary exile more supportable even for a day or two. So Northwood had to get into his boat and rejoin his steamer with all his offers of service peremptorily refused.

The *Tambora* next arrived off Ampenan, the roadstead of the magnificent but little-known island of Lombok. A Dutch cruiser and two gunboats lay sullenly at anchor guarding the place, while on shore fortifications crowded with troops indicated an abnormal state of affairs. Of trading ships or commerce of any kind there was no sign.

It would take too long to relate how the Sassaks of Lombok came to be governed by a foreign prince, of another blood and language to theirs, from the island of Bali. Suffice it to say that the Balinese Sultan and his favourites oppressed the Sassaks most grievously, until they finally appealed to the Dutch for protection. The Governor-General of Java despatched a strong force under the command of General van Ham and General Vetter to compel the Sultan, an aged man who had reigned over Lombok ever since the year 1841, to treat his subjects more reasonably. All went well, apparently, until the Dutch generals insisted on the payment of a very heavy

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indemnity to cover the cost of an expedition made in the interests of humanity. The Sultan paid a first instalment of a million guilders, and then grew restive and rebellious about finding any more money, whereupon the Dutch troops occupied the royal palaces of Matáram and Djokranagara. These palaces were of immense extent, and the buildings of Djokranagara alone covered some square miles. Djokranagara, consisting for the most part of stone and brick buildings of extraordinary solidity, was something like the ancient Kremlin at Moscow. Within the walls were a number of palaces, temples, barracks and streets of houses in which lived the thousands of soldiers and slaves required to keep up the dignity of a powerful sultan.

Djokranagara is now a great ruin, rapidly becoming overgrown with jungle, but it is still easy to see where the palaces, temples and streets formerly stood. The whole of this royal city was divided into squares, guarded by hundreds of gates, making a vast labyrinth out of which escape was well-nigh impossible. Into this death-trap the Dutch generals led their troops, who were treated by the inhabitants as welcome friends to be regaled without stint. The generals were the guests of the Sultan. One night, however, they had certain suspicions and preferred to remain with their troops rather than return to the sumptuous quarters allotted to them in the palace. They thus saved themselves from instant destruction. There had been a great feast, and the Dutch troops, of which the rank and file were mostly natives, were thrown completely off their guard; it is said that bebies of women were told off to offer them their charms. Precisely at midnight the signal was given, and the Dutch troops encamped in the squares of the city, dominated on all sides by temples and walls, were suddenly aroused by a terrible rifle-fire, while spears flew thick and fast through the air. Taken at a hopeless disadvantage they fell in hundreds. General Van Ham, badly wounded by a shot through the body, never-

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theless struggled for nearly half an hour to extricate his troops from their terrible position, when he was struck by a second shot which killed him. He died as became a gallant soldier.

General Vetter finally succeeded in cutting his way out with a mere remnant of his troops, and got safely with them to Ampenan, where, secure under the protection of the guns of the Dutch fleet, he was able to await reinforcements from Java without being molested.

In the meantime the joy at Djokranagara was unbounded. The Dutch had lost their senior general, over one hundred officers, non-commissioned officers, and European soldiers, and more than a thousand of their best native troops. They had been compelled, moreover, to leave the whole of their artillery within the fatal walls of Djokranagara.

General Vetter, furious at this treacherous midnight attack, vowed vengeance, and swore that he would not leave one stone of Djokranagara standing on the other. Reinforced in due course, he proceeded to carry out his threat in a deplorable way. During the interval, however, it became evident to the Dutch that the Sultan of Lombok must have a skilled European adviser in his service. The Balinese were armed with breech-loading rifles on that dreadful night, and it was still more significant that the captured guns were being effectively worked, a thing impossible if the untrained soldiers of the Sultan had been left to themselves.

The military adviser of the Sultan turned out to be a Russian of the name of Maligan, who was afterwards captured and thrown into a Dutch prison at Sourabaya, in which he will no doubt die, if he is not dead already. The Russian Consul at Batavia afterwards told Northwood that since Maligan had chosen to take up arms against the Dutch Government he would simply have to suffer the sentence passed upon him, whatever it might be.

Directly General Vetter found himself in sufficient

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force, he conducted his operations against Djokranagara with great determination. After the place had been steadily bombarded for eight days by the ships of the fleet with tremendous effect, the final attack swept away the defence of the Sultan's army, and Vetter and his troops once more entered Djokranagara, slaughtering every human being they found, man, woman and child. The attack of the Balinese had been treacherous and bloody, the revenge of General Vetter was murderous and inhuman.

It is related that when Vetter a few months later made his triumphal entry into Amsterdam, a wreath bound with black ribbons, and bearing the inscription :

" From the Women of Lombok "

was flung into his carriage. The incident speaks for itself, and is reported to have had its effect on the general.

Shattered by a prolonged bombardment, pillaged and set in flames by an infuriated soldiery, Djokranagara was soon robbed of its splendours, and Vetter, mindful of his vow, sent in gangs of labourers to overthrow its walls. Little is now left of the magnificent place except an occasional gate or some shattered wall, as everything has been razed to some two or three feet from the ground, and a rank growth of jungle is fast obliterating even these ruins. The vandalism of the Dutch general was almost as regrettable as his cruelty. He was apparently unable to destroy the marvellously beautiful artificial lake in the grounds of the Sultan's palace. It is a great rectangular sheet of deep, clear water, surrounded by massive stone embankments and extensive gardens filled with fruit trees and flowering shrubs. A stone bridge stretches across its cool waters to a stone pavilion rising from the centre of the lake, a favourite resort of the Sultan and his ladies during the heat of the day. The Sassaks declare that vast treasures are still concealed in special guarded chambers at the bottom of the lake. The Dutch found

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thousands of English sovereigns and piles of their own dollars and guilders in the palaces, besides diamond-hilted krisses, jewels, and gold plate in any quantity, but still the actual spoil was much less than the vast wealth of the Sultan indicated. It is quite in accordance with the traditions of native monarchs to conceal gold and diamonds in incredible quantities with the most extraordinary ingenuity.

The Sultan of Lombok, a man eighty years of age, was captured. He was wounded in the final assault on Djokranagara, and did not long survive his capture and deportation to Batavia.

Northwood visited Matáram, to find that the palace had been destroyed and replaced by rows of temporary barracks for the Dutch troops. Pushing his way further inland, he got to Narmada, or Ayer Mada, the only one of the Sultan's palaces which escaped destruction, owing to the fact that it is some miles away up in the mountains and far from the scene of the recent military operations. Ayer Mada is also of great extent. A lake has been formed at the bottom of the valley, and it abounds in streams and fountains and delightful groves. The six massive stone terraces of Ayer Mada rise above each other with a truly majestic beauty amidst scenery of the greatest loveliness. Here and there are secluded stone courts, from whose lofty walls columns of crystal clear water gush from quaintly carved stone gargoyles, chiefly representing the heads of elephants, deer, and other animals. A palace such as Ayer Mada requires a small army of people to keep it in order, and it is fast showing signs of decay, and will crumble to ruins in a few short years. The lake is choked with weeds, and the lovely walks on the stone terraces are becoming overgrown with jungle. The terrible vegetation of these countries works destruction in an incredibly short time on the most solid masonry if it is left to itself.

Attracted by the sound of splashing waters, Northwood

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wandered into an enclosed courtyard made sweet by a number of fountains flinging their diamond sprays in the air. Rills of delicious water danced through stone channels and glittered in the sunshine. Here, where the beautiful favourites of the Sultan bathed themselves in sacred seclusion, Northwood to his horror beheld two ruffianly-looking Chinamen washing the carcase of a pig which they had just killed. Modern methods of civilization have their little drawbacks !

It is believed that Maligan tried very hard to get the Sultan to concentrate his defence at Ayer Mada well out of the range of the guns of the Dutch fleet. Had the advice of the Russian been adopted, the Dutch forces would have had a very bad time of it indeed, and the ultimate result of their operations would have been very different. Nothing, however, could induce the aged monarch to abandon his palaces at Djokranagara and Matáram, and amidst their splendours he met his fate.

Northwood mused continually over this last page in the history of Lombok. The Balinese dynasty had been destroyed root and branch, and the Dutch were now the nominal masters of the island. But the Sassaks, who had called in the Dutch, were now doing all they could to murder their saviours. The conquerors could hardly show themselves out of range of the guns on their forts, protected by wire entanglements, looking like so many monstrous spiders' webs, to stop any sudden rush of the Sassaks. A Dutch *contrôleur* was murdered by the Sassaks while Northwood was in the island, an event which cast a gloom over a garrison subject to all manner of unexpected and treacherous attacks. It seemed that the Dutch conquest of Lombok was but a barren and profitless triumph.

Northwood saw numbers of the Sassaks, a splendid, handsome race of men and women. They certainly do not possess the amiable characteristics of the Javanese, but they are a fine people of whom much might be made.

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As for Lombok itself it is a superb and fertile country, capable of producing many riches. The Peak of Lombok is a towering mass, estimated to be about eleven thousand feet in height. It is an island which would do amazingly well under the British flag. As it is, Lombok lies desolate and unknown to the rest of the world.

Northwood found his way from Lombok to Batavia and thence to Singapore. For many acts of kindness he felt deeply indebted to numbers of his Dutch friends.

But even after all his travels in their lands in the Far East, he could hardly bring his mind to realize the vastness and immensity of the empire which is known as the Netherlands Indies—a derelict and little known empire, it is true. It seems strange that by what appears to be a series of accidents, territories embracing many thousands of miles, and peopled by many millions of inhabitants, should be governed by a very tiny little State in Europe, of which the very existence may be said to be guaranteed by Great Britain. The Dutch system of governing their far-flung chain of colonies is entirely different from ours, and in some respects at least it is better. They do not force an elaborate system of education on millions of natives who are not ripe for it, and then stand around in pious astonishment when discontent and sedition reward the sowers of some peculiarly wild oats.

In any case, it is much better that the Netherlands Indies should remain under the Dutch flag than that they should by any chance be transferred to a foreign power possessed of capital and enterprise, such as Germany. It will be a sinister day both for Holland and Great Britain if Germany should ever become the mistress of the Netherlands Indies.

It is regrettable that nations cannot conduct their business like private individuals. If Holland could but cede us one or two of her superfluous islands in exchange for value received, what a good thing it would be for everybody, and especially for Holland!

CHAPTER XXXVI

NORTHWOOD TAKES CHARGE OF A CERTAIN COMPANY IN BORNEO AND OPENS UP A TRADE WITH THE PHILIPPINE ISLANDS.

LIFE with Richard Piggott was anything but agreeable for his enterprising junior.

The manager, at last finding the situation intolerable, asked Northwood whether he would not like to go to Japan permanently, open his own office there, and run things after his own devices. But Northwood was not to be carried away by the offer of an independent managership. To be successful in Japan he needed the hearty and zealous co-operation of Singapore, a thing which he knew full well was not to be expected. He was to be put in the forefront of the battle and to take great risks. He therefore told Piggott that he would not go to Japan again, but promised him that he would seize the first opportunity of leaving Singapore whenever suitable employment elsewhere offered itself. With this Piggott had to be content. Nor was it very long before the desired opportunity came, and he was rid of his lieutenant.

There was a certain concern which called itself the Borneo Mining and Planting Company, which had acquired the collieries in Labuan, and, like its predecessors, was working them at a loss. The company was in rather a delicate state of health financially, and as Northwood seemed to be a capable sort of person with a faculty for making himself disagreeable when occasion required, he

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was ordered to proceed to Borneo and find out why the Borneo Mining and Planting Company did not pay.

So our hero once more sailed for Labuan, but alas ! the ship no longer flew the Northwood flag, which had been so well known on the coast for so many years. The night before he arrived at his destination he had a very peculiar dream. He saw the harbour of Labuan most distinctly in every detail beneath a sky of appalling gloom and blackness, on which suddenly appeared in letters of fire the words : "*Here thou shalt surely die !*" The scene suddenly changed to a still more horrible view of the unsightly and neglected cemetery of Labuan. In the front of this picture a newly dug grave gaped, amidst the rank weeds and jungly growth of the foul place. He awoke with a start, and could not get away from the depressing influences of his dream. It seemed to be a warning. After all, it would not be strange if he left his bones in the island, as many a good man had done before him.

On landing he was told by a half-caste clerk that he was expected to take up his quarters in the company's offices, a large, bare, whitewashed brick building, which Northwood recognized at once as having belonged to his father in the brave days of old. Walking through the scantily furnished and dusty offices, he was ushered into a large room, in which he found a rickety wooden bedstead, a cheap washstand, and a couple of inexpensive chairs. In this apartment he had his luggage placed and started to have a look round Labuan.

Evidently the manager of the company was not going to trouble about him, and, of course, the rest of the staff took their cue from their chief. His first call was upon the Resident, no other than his friend Mr. Mixer, the island being at that time administered by the Chartered Company. Northwood heard a good deal from the worthy Resident about the state of affairs at the mines. He then looked in at the hotel, a ramshackle wooden barn, roofed with palm thatch, where he was most cordially received by



THE RAILWAY AT LAE.

to xiv
ABSORB

Northwood takes charge of a certain Company

the versatile landlord and a small group of the rare citizens of Victoria, the port of the island of Labuan. Here he received further enlightenment concerning the methods of the manager and his staff.

After a round of drinks it was suggested that Northwood should be taken round to Cheng Whatt's, where he would undoubtedly meet some of the B. M. and P. Co.'s people. A short walk brought them to this popular place of entertainment. Cheng Whatt was an enterprising Chinaman, who had invested in a full-sized billiard-table of some antiquity, and sold drinks against "chits" to his European clients.

Here Northwood found half a dozen men of varying ages enjoying a game of "shell-out." They were on the best of terms with each other, and all belonged to the B. M. and P. Co. All six of these gentlemen were anxious to stand Northwood a drink, and that he should "chip in" when the game was finished. From their unrestrained and artless conversation the new arrival learned volumes. Presently he bade these genial sportsmen farewell and requested them to tell their chief that he would be a passenger by the first train in the morning. He then sat down to a solitary and scanty meal served in the office, and having meditated for a couple of hours over a situation which was quite new to him, he turned in and went to sleep.

He was up at daylight, but there was no need to hurry, because the train was delayed for a couple of hours waiting for two of the billiard-players, who had slept in town and were late in putting in an appearance. Together with these gentlemen Northwood took his seat in a shabby sort of car, hooked on to a long string of empty coal-trucks, and the train then started at an extremely moderate speed for the mines about twelve miles distant.

On arrival, Northwood was escorted to the manager's residence, quite a roomy and comfortable bungalow, which had, however, a dusty and neglected look about

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it. The manager, Mr. Michael Murphy, was busy at the moment giving a lesson in English to a class of native children with the aid of some small picture-books. It was notorious that Mr. Murphy was exceedingly fond of the natives, and very kind to them. He rose to greet Northwood most pleasantly and unaffectedly, and dismissing his class, proposed to take his visitor round the mines. He was a most sanguine and cheerful person, a ratty little man, who crackled with laughter at his own jokes all the time. If the mines did not pay now, he said, they would sooner or later, and Rome was not built in a day!

The inspection of the mines was not at all satisfactory to Northwood. He observed with amazement dozens of natives dressed in white jackets and trousers, whose function in life seemed to be to stir up the Chinese miners with a short rattan and call them pigs. Murphy explained that these were *mandors* or foremen, and fine fellows they were too, cheap at a dollar a day. The idea of putting them into white jackets and trousers was a good one, he said, for when a *mandor* was dressed like the Europeans, the miners would have more respect for him. Northwood discovered that the engineer in charge of the pumps lived ten miles away from his job, because his wife did not like the mines. One horrifying detail cropped up after another amidst the explanations of Murphy, which gave Northwood food for thought.

Northwood dined out and slept at the manager's bungalow that night, another guest being Captain Bull, the skipper of the company's steamer *Snowdrop*, at that time lying in the harbour.

The dinner was quite a jolly affair in its way. Murphy was a strict teetotaller himself, but he had whisky and ale for those who liked. He practically monopolized the conversation and poured out anecdotes about his doings by the dozen.

He related with great gusto how he had compelled the Resident to silence his buglers. It appeared that, while

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Murphy was spending a few days at Victoria, he was much disturbed by the bugle-calls of the Sikhs, whose barracks were near the company's offices. He thereupon got hold of some foolscap of the largest size, upon which he wrote officially to the Resident in his own favourite style, demanding of that gentleman that he should forthwith order his ungodly rabble of heathen Sikhs to discontinue their discordant and cacophonous blasts on their brazen trumpets, as being deafening to the ears and utterly prejudicial to the health of any Christian gentleman, especially when he happened to be the manager of the Borneo Mining and Planting Company, upon whose ability and undisturbed exercise of his faculties the entire prosperity of the colony depended. Having covered several pages of foolscap, Murphy had his despatch delivered at the Residency. Mixer, who had already been favoured with many such of Murphy's screeds, threw it to one side, and thought no more about it. Murphy thereupon fixed an enormous steam siren—bought with other metal parts sold from the wreck of a big steamer—to a locomotive. The railway line describes a curve at the back of the Residency. Murphy ran his locomotive on to this curve and set a full head of steam blowing continuously through the siren. The appalling hootings and yellings of this infernal contrivance started at dinner time and were kept up throughout the whole of a hideous night. Various messengers, nay, the Resident himself, went in vain to Murphy's quarters to beg him to stop the blood-curdling screams of his steam siren. All alike were coolly informed that Mr. Murphy was asleep and had given strict orders that he was not to be disturbed. The doors and windows were all so formidably bolted and barred that there was no getting at Murphy, *if he had been there*, but it was afterwards discovered that he was sleeping blissfully in a bungalow on the other side of the bay that night.

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Next day, Murphy obstinately maintained his right to do what he liked on his own railway, and in the end a bleary-eyed and nerve-racked Resident capitulated, and promised that the bugles of his Sikhs should remain silent while Murphy was in town, provided that the maddening siren should cease.

The burly and jovial skipper of the *Snowdrop* laughed so long and loud at the story that he attracted Northwood's attention. In answer to certain pointed questions, Captain Bull said that he had been in port for some weeks, and had no idea when he was going to sea again. He was waiting for a cargo of coal which was not as yet in being. He certainly had not paid off his officers or any of his crew. A query as to whether a fully manned steamer, which might at a pinch be run with slack coal, could not be employed coasting instead of getting foul while lying idly at anchor, gave offence. Murphy talked of his duties at the mine, while the stout skipper mumbled something about outsiders who stuck their noses into things that did not concern them not being wanted in Labuan. The chill set up by Northwood's last remark was such that the three men could not stand it any longer and went to bed.

Next morning was no better from a social or any other point of view. Captain Bull, who was no dissembler, gulped down his early tea with an effort, and announcing that he had had "enough of this," rushed off to catch the first train. Murphy, on the other hand, was epigrammatic at the expense of ignorant amateurs who thought they knew all about mining. Finally he put on his pith hat and told Northwood he was ready to resume the inspection of the mines under a burning sun. Northwood saw much of which he entirely disapproved, and very little which gave him any satisfaction. By the afternoon matters had reached such a pitch that he thought it wise to take the next train to Victoria.

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The following day he devoted to looking into the books in the Victoria office, and discovered a good deal in the way of expenditure with which he disagreed.

Towards evening, Mr. St. Leger, the cheery landlord of the hotel, stepped in to have a chat with Northwood, who was glad enough to see anybody who did not wish him to die suddenly and unpleasantly. From St. Leger, Northwood learned that it was now all over the place that relations between Murphy and Northwood were getting strained.

The landlord had barely left Northwood, when Mr. Michael Murphy himself came striding into the place. The manager was evidently in fighting trim and promptly told Northwood that he meant to have it out with him. Who was he? What was he doing there at all? When was he going away?—the last point being the most important of all.

Now Northwood's credentials were undeniable and his authority complete, so it was not long before he convinced Murphy that he was to be reckoned with. In the end Murphy threatened to resign.

"There is a German steamer going on Wednesday. Unless you tell me that you will return to Singapore by that boat, you shall have my resignation in by to-morrow morning! What do you say to that?"

Northwood congratulated Murphy on his good sense. Why should he not take that Wednesday's steamer himself, catch the first mail homewards, and settle up with the directors of the B. M. and P. Co. in London?

"All right!" said Murphy. "Mind, you're responsible for everything from this minute!" and he flung out of the room.

Northwood immediately sat down to his desk and penned a cablegram to London, in which he reported what had happened.

Next day back came the reply from London: "Take charge yourself."

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Murphy, taking things very coolly, packed up his traps to go by the German steamer the following day. Northwood saw him off the next evening and they parted on quite amicable terms.

Michael Murphy having gone, Northwood found himself at last promoted to managerial rank. But he got very little satisfaction from his unexpected rise or the way in which it had come about. The task of reorganizing the affairs of the company opened up a dismal perspective before which even his stout heart quailed. Nor did he like being transferred to the service of another company. True, he was merely "seconded," and would in time revert to the Golconda Company, for which he had a sort of dog-like affection, however much Piggott and one or two others worried him. Moreover, he had fears that if he were unlucky, things would go hardly with him, whilst the price of success might be lifelong servitude to a company of which he knew very little and for which he did not greatly care.

However, he had to put all such considerations to one side and tackle the problems before him. Having notified the staff that a new judge had arisen in Israel of a different kind from the departed Murphy, he took prompt measures to stop the mining staff from fooling away their time at Cheng Whatt's or anywhere else in Victoria. The station-master had orders to report to Northwood in person all arrivals from the mines.

On the next pay-day he dismissed every one of Murphy's *mandors* at a dollar per diem, thus saving quite a respectable sum.

The Resident very kindly remonstrated with Northwood about this particular measure and its danger to him. It was no small thing to make so many enemies on one day, all of whom were handy with the knife.

"I can't protect you," urged Mixer, "and if you do get killed, it will be so easy for your murderers to escape to

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the mainland, and then I shan't be able to hang them, don't you know!"

Northwood soothed the Resident by assuring him that he should not feel the least offended if nobody was hanged for his murder, whereat Mixer sagely remarked that as long as Northwood didn't mind it would be all right.

The dismissed *mandors* were very surly and threatening, but when Northwood knocked one of them down with a smashing blow between the eyes for telling him with the vilest insolence that he would be killed if he did not reinstate the lot of them at once, the fellows knuckled down and took quite contentedly to loafing, varied with a little fishing.

The next thing was to take the *Snowdrop* in hand. She was a rusty and ill-kept collier, seventeen years of age, with her original boilers in her. Her decks were all of bare iron save a strip of a poop-deck which had been floored off with planks. She was probably called the *Snowdrop* because there was nothing white about her. Still she was a handy old tramp, carrying her fifteen hundred tons of dead weight, and it certainly was silly to keep her idle in port for months together. Captain Bull was a rattling good seaman, and had been a first-class skipper all round, but he had commanded the *Snowdrop* for ten years, and was getting demoralized and fat on board of a steamer which was practically a fixture in port. He had the wit to see that it would suit him to be on good terms with the new manager, and he readily fell in with a programme to run the ship for all she was worth. There was, however, a distinctly republican spirit throughout the ship. The chief officer and chief engineer were very free with their uninvited opinions, which were contrary to Northwood's ideas and expressed with considerable crudity. When they left in a huff on being told that their advice was not wanted, Northwood suggested that they might be replaced with advantage. Bull was greatly shocked at the bare hint of such a thing, and said with

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much warmth they had kept their jobs for so many years that they were part and parcel of the ship and that he for one "couldn't bear the idea of their gettin' the swop."

"All right," answered Northwood. "I don't want to put you out, or to tear up everything by the roots the first day, but you will tell Mr. Nipper and Mr. McKillop that I will stand no nonsense from them or anybody else. This ship is going to be run hard, and I'll make a clean sweep of every man on the ship if I find it necessary!"

Thereupon he walked ashore, leaving the captain in a profuse perspiration.

The very next day the *Snowdrop* started loading a half cargo of coal for Singapore, and Northwood had small difficulty in persuading the Chinese traders to fill up her remaining holds with sago-flour and rattans. The *Snowdrop's* men thought that they were being hideously ill-used, and in language both pathetic and forcible deplored the halcyon days for ever fled. However, they did their work well enough under the unkind and insistent eye of the new manager, whom they damned most heartily.

With his Chinese labourers Northwood had great trouble. He felt that he was not yet strong enough to deal with the secret *kongsi*, a Chinese committee at the mines which had decreed when and where the labour force should work without consulting the manager, so he had to content himself with watching them until he felt that he could strike his blow.

With the smaller force at the port it was easier to deal. Here his chief concern was with the poor health of his coolies. Fever and sore eyes were sadly prevalent and cut down his effectives terribly. The company's medical officer took Northwood to see the vile dens, insanitary and verminous, in which the poor devils were crammed like herrings. These miserable shanties were kept by Chinamen, who fleeced the coolies out of an exorbitant

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percentage of their wages for the stinking quarters which they occupied. No wonder the men were ill.

Northwood immediately started building a range of barracks near his offices, which should provide clean and comfortable lodgings for his coolies at a fraction of the rental paid to the lodging-house crimps. These last got frantic at the idea of losing their golden harvests and tried to poison the minds of the coolies against Northwood in every possible way. When the barracks were completed it was almost impossible to get the coolies to occupy them. However, a few bolder spirits led the way and the rest followed like sheep. Northwood got word through one of his favourite headmen that the Chinese crimps had bought up some of the coolies and intended to fire the barracks that very night.

It was difficult to know what to do. The Resident might make an awful hash of things if the matter was placed before him, and it would certainly be safer and better to catch the incendiaries in the act, and take them to the Resident afterwards. The barracks were built on brick pillars, but the rest of the structure was of posts and planks, roofed with palm thatch, which would burn like a box of matches once it was set on fire. There was no room for mistakes.

Boon Tek, the headman, asked for his advice, said that he would guarantee the capture and punishment of the men. If Northwood rode down to the barracks at ten o'clock that night, he would see the result of the whole thing. With a heavy heart Northwood mounted his horse that night and rode off slowly to his destination. He was warned not to arrive too soon, so as not to frighten the incendiaries from making their attempt. As he neared the barracks he saw Boon Tek standing at the main entrance with a joyous grin on him.

"It's all right, *Tuan!*" said the Chinaman. "We have got them all right!"

From his saddle Northwood could see in the midst of a

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mob of shouting and yelling Chinamen half a dozen very sulky-looking ruffians squatting on the ground with their arms tightly pinioned behind them. A small pile of *damar* torches, rags soaked in petroleum, and boxes of matches lay in front of them ; also some ropes and a dozen stout rattans neatly cut into lengths of about four feet.

"Here they are," said Boon Tek, "and this is what they brought with them—the pigs ! Better give them a good thrashing and let them go. That will finish the thing and they will never come back again. If the police come to arrest them there will be a fight and somebody will be killed. May we flog them ? "

Northwood just nodded his head, whereupon eager hands unbound the miscreants, divested them of every rag of clothing, and lashed each of them securely to a cocoanut tree. There was quite a squabble as to who should have the honour of flogging the culprits, but once this point was settled, no time was lost. Two floggers were told off to each incendiary and the punishment began. The rattans whistled rapidly through the air and cut into the flesh of the sufferers, who yelled horribly as their blood flowed under a hail of biting strokes.

In vain did Northwood shout orders for the punishment to stop. The Chinese simply delight in torture, and had packed round each of the trees in closely wedged rings, delirious with the sheer enjoyment of a spectacle so much to their taste. With infinite exertion Northwood got one man after another cast off, but the thing had gone too far, and they were in a pitiable plight. By Boon Tek's orders they were huddled into their cotton clothes and flung out at the main gateway, where their friends picked them up and carried them away. Boon Tek was triumphant, but Northwood was very uneasy. However, he thanked the headman and his assistants very cordially, and having got from them a list in Chinese characters of the names of the men who had just been flogged, he

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decided to ride off to the Residency, late as it was, in order to lay an information against them.

He found the Resident lying half asleep in a long chair, coolly and lightly clad in the singlet and sarong of those heated climes. Mixer appeared to no advantage in this scanty raiment, but he shambled to his feet as he hospitably exclaimed: "Come along and have a drink, my young friend! You ride late to-night. Anything up?"

Northwood refreshed himself with a much needed whisky and soda, and then told the Resident about the row at the coolie-barracks.

"Well, I'm d——d!" shouted the infuriated Resident. "You go and have a lot of people deliberately flogged and then come to tell *me* about it! What's the good of a Resident and a police force if you are to take the law into your own hands whenever it suits you? You're just like your father. You want to boss everybody and everything. I'm no more the Resident of Labuan while you're here than I'm the Emperor of China!"

Anything less like an Emperor of China than Mixer at this moment can hardly be imagined.

"It's very awkward for you!" he went on. "These men you've had flogged have lots of money. You can't blame Hugh St. John if he takes up their case in court, and there is not another lawyer in the place."

The two men now discussed the situation from an opportunist point of view. It would never do to convict the manager of the company. Better to arrest the men on the charge of incendiarism, and if they were badly hurt put them in the prison-hospital, where Dr. Boxer could attend to them.

Northwood handed in the list of the men he charged with incendiarism, and they were all arrested without delay. They got Hugh St. John to bring actions against Northwood criminally and civilly, but without success. Then they in turn were tried and condemned to serve in

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the chain-gang until there was a steamer for China by which they could be deported.

Thus was all trouble with the labour force at Victoria ended. The men rapidly improved in health. Fever and sore eyes became a thing of the past, and Northwood found to his immense gratification that he was very popular with his men and that they would do anything for him.

Northwood's labour was unremitting; he worked early and late, but not without some results. At the end of his first financial year he was able to bring out a balance-sheet showing that he had reduced the losses very materially. He had nearly established an equilibrium in his budget and might look forward with some confidence to bringing it out on the right side next year.

Meanwhile the *Snowdrop* was being run with a certain amount of success and usefulness, but the bitter competition of the regular steamers drove Northwood to extend his trade to Sulu. As things were now working quietly at Labuan, he decided to make a voyage in the *Snowdrop* and see if he could not improve matters. He therefore sailed in her *viâ* the usual Borneo ports, and one fine morning arrived at Sulu. This was his first sight of the Philippines.

Sulu appeared to be a magnificent island. The Spaniards spell its name Jolo and pronounce it Holó. They have called the capital of the island Jolo also, and it must surely be one of the most picturesque little citadels in existence. Situated in a beautiful bay dominated by verdant hills, the white walls and towers arise from the edge of the waters with a most pleasing effect. The theatrical appearance of the place becomes enhanced on closer inspection. The spotlessly clean streets of Jolo resemble so many garden walks shaded by beautiful trees and shrubs, which are reserved for pedestrians only, as all horses and carts are stopped at the gates. Many of the buildings which when seen from the sea appear to be of marble, stone, or

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brick, are found to be but wooden structures painted so as to imitate more costly and durable material. As armed soldiers and gaily clad natives are to be met at every turn, the whole effect is stagey and unreal to an astonishing degree.

To judge by the vigilance of the military authorities, it seemed as if an attack on Jolo might be expected at any minute. The entire town is walled in and formidably defended. Sentries were posted everywhere, and a strong body of soldiers with loaded rifles and fixed bayonets guarded each of the gates. Every Moro, on entering the place, was disarmed and minutely searched. Patrols of cavalry rode constantly round, and at six p.m. every gate of the town was closed and communication with the outer world completely cut off. The sea front was guarded by batteries and a couple of gunboats.

The Spaniards had been taught by many a sharp lesson how daring and deadly are the attacks of the Moros, who are fanatical Mohammedans careless of death, and of such a physique that it is very difficult to kill them. An elephant gun is the sort of weapon really required to settle a Moro, and it is quite necessary even then to see that "he isn't shammin' when he's dead." He will send his terrible knife into the heart of his enemy after he himself has been absolutely riddled with bullets.

The *Snowdrop* had barely dropped her anchors before she was boarded by the Spaniards in force. There was a polite lieutenant with a posse of carabineros, and a medico-military officer with his attendants. The inspection of the ship having proved satisfactory, the lieutenant suggested that Northwood should honour the Governor with a visit.

General Urrutia y Huerta proved to be a most distinguished and delightful person, who received the Englishman with much cordiality, and assured him that the pretty little palace and all it contained were at his disposal. Northwood explained to the Governor his reasons for

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visiting Jolo, and was assured that every assistance should be given to him in establishing a regular trade with the island.

He next called on the Capitan China, another delightful person, who also promptly placed his extensive mansion at his disposal. Tiana was quite the most cultured and polished Chinaman our hero had ever seen. He was, moreover, a very handsome man and a good Roman Catholic. He urged Northwood to give the Sulu trade a little of his time and not to hurry his movements unduly. There was plenty of cargo for Singapore at excellent freights, but it would take time to collect it. A few days spent in studying Sulu, Siassi, and Zamboanga would result in an organized trade, which would amply repay the time and trouble devoted to it.

This seemed to be so reasonable that it was decided to extend the cruise of the *Snowdrop* somewhat further than originally planned. Various details having been debated and settled, Tiana then led Northwood into a large and airy room, in which he insisted that his new friend should take up his quarters as long as he remained in Sulu. Now was the time for a *siesta*, and Tiana, begging to be excused, bowed himself out of the apartment. Northwood was fain to confess to himself that his luxurious surroundings made a welcome change from his cramped and stuffy crib on board of the *Snowdrop*.

He spent the evening with the Governor at the café, listening to some really fine music executed by the band of a native regiment. The *mestizos* are a singularly musical people.

The following day was devoted partly to loading the *Snowdrop* and partly to hearing what a young planter and trader, named Charlie Schuck, had to say about the island. It was absolutely forbidden, as they both knew, to go outside the line of sentries without a special permit from the Governor, which he would certainly refuse. Yet Northwood was very anxious to see Maimbong, the capital of



A SCENE AT BUD-BUDJO IN THE ISLAND OF JOLO DURING THE WAR IN THE PHILIPPINES.

The American invaders (in the background) surveying the bodies of the slaughtered Moros.

[Facing p. 338]

TO VIND
ARTIFICIAL

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the Sultan of Sulu, right across the other side of the island. So Schuck promised to manage about ponies and guides. Shortly after daybreak Northwood got through one of the gates almost as soon as it was opened, and found Schuck waiting for him under a clump of trees with two stout Sulu ponies. With scarce a word they got into their saddles and were off at a gallop down a magnificent avenue of coco-nut trees. Unchallenged, they flew past Fort Princesa de Asturias, and were beyond the bounds of civilization. A little further they met their escort, four well-armed men, mounted on fast ponies and got up in their finest costumes in honour of the occasion.

The road of the little troop lay through a hilly and grassy country diversified by some lovely woods. Presently they fell in with a party of Moros who were armed to the teeth. Moreover, they were in a hurry, and in a very bad temper. They shouted that they were after a band of cattle-stealers and disappeared. Their long spears and sharp swords would soon make short work of the fugitives if they overtook them.

Schuck explained that the Moros were a good deal given to "lifting" the cattle, wives, and daughters of their neighbours, or, indeed, anything portable which might happen to belong to others. These forays generally ended in one of those bloody fights which so admirably suit the Moro temperament.

It was a pleasant contrast to see the Moros ploughing their fields in scattered spots. Their huge buffaloes made light work of dragging their little wooden ploughs through queer scratches of furrows. The soil is exceedingly fertile. All over the country small plantations of hemp, sugar-cane, coffee and tobacco flourished exceedingly under the most primitive and casual cultivation. Coco-nut trees looked splendid everywhere. The whole island ought to be one succession of beautiful and productive plantations, were Sulu tranquillized and decently governed. During this long ride our travellers did not come across a single

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decent-sized *kampung* or village. Three or four bamboo huts clustered together represented the nearest approach to a settlement of human beings in a country easily able to support a dense population.

Finally Maimbong, the ancient capital of Sulu, was reached. Here was a veritable town, largely built over the water, but of surprising extent. The Sultan of Sulu himself was on a pilgrimage to Mecca, with about a score of his wives and a retinue of his retainers. Our travellers were, therefore, received at the palace by his mother, the Sultana, an exceedingly royal old lady, who graciously extended her hand for the Europeans to kiss. She was clever and managing as well as dignified. She told Northwood that she remembered his father very well, as a great man and a true friend to Sulu during its subjugation by the Spaniards. The Sultana was particularly anxious that the *Snowdrop* should steam round to Maimbong, which her Royal Highness declared was the real place for trade. What did the son of Captain Northwood expect to find amongst the Castilians cowering behind the walls of Jolo, and afraid to show themselves a hundred paces beyond their forts? Would he have pearls, pearl shell, hemp and copra in abundance, let him bring the *Snowdrop* to Maimbong and his steamer should be loaded.

This was a really dazzling prospect, but there was something below the surface of all this which did not suit Northwood. The Sultana gave him to understand that silver dollars were useful in Maimbong as elsewhere, but that if he wanted to give a real stimulus to his trade and cultivate his tree so that it should bear golden fruit, he would arrange to bring a good supply of rifles and ammunition with him, and particularly a few cases of the *obat*, or medicine which kills fishes.

"Rifles, cartridges and dynamite!" said Northwood. "That's pretty dangerous stuff to handle."

"Your father supplied the old Sultan with arms!" rejoined Schuck.

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"Yes! Sulu was then independent, and if my father chose to assist the Sultan against the invader, that was quite a different thing from what is now being talked about between us. Sulu to-day is under the flag of Spain, and what's the good of encouraging a rebellion?"

"For goodness' sake *don't* give her a flat refusal. Say you will consider her proposals and see what can be done."

Northwood thereupon made a hurried little speech, in which the statements were all of the non-committal order, and with this the Sultana had to be content.

A number of Sulu chiefs grouped round the Sultana listened to the conversation without saying a word, but it was easy to see that they were deeply interested in it.

The two men now took their leave of the Sultana with many compliments, and quitted the palace immediately.

They had not much time to look about the town, as it was high time to be off to Jolo. Northwood was amazed to see afloat in the waters of Maimbong a Roman galley, of all things! There it was—a shapely white craft, with a sharp beak and a row of shields hung round its rail. How did that galley get there? There was no time for making inquiries, however, so the adventurous pair got into their saddles and rode off attended by their escort as before.

Presently Schuck said: "I shan't go much more than half-way with you—I'm off to my plantation. You'll get into an awful row with the Governor about this expedition, and I shan't show my nose in Jolo until it's blown over. These spearmen will see you safe until you get in sight of Jolo."

Shortly after this he bade good-bye to his companion and trotted off. Northwood rode fast in the midst of his escort, and marvelled at the endurance and surefootedness of the Sulu ponies, which took everything as it came, rough or smooth, and splashed through swift and rocky

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streams without any effort. When they got in sight of the Princessa Fort, his guides saluted him and rode off sharply in another direction.

Left to himself, Northwood galloped for all he was worth and just got through the main gate as it was about to be closed. He passed the guard all right, and was riding off quietly in the direction of Tiana's mansion, when he was stopped in the Paseo de Arolas by an officer, who ordered him to report himself to the Governor immediately.

The General received Northwood with every mark of displeasure and bade him relate how he had been spending his day.

"So you have been to Maimbong to see the Sultana, the most dangerous woman in the Filipinas, and more to be feared than a hundred imbecile sultans. That is how you return our kindness and confidence! I suppose she asked you for arms?"

"Yes," said Northwood.

"Also for dynamite?"

"Yes!"

"Ha! I knew it! Always her one idea, to smuggle dynamite into Jolo to blow up one of our gates or a breach in the walls and then pour in her Moros to murder us all. Well, I shall put you under arrest and confiscate your ship. I see that you are the true son of your father!"

Northwood naturally protested against either imprisonment or confiscation. Had he desired to conspire with the Sultana he would have taken his steamer direct to Maimbong, landed his contraband of war, and got away to sea again before the Governor knew anything of his movements. His father, he continued, had been perfectly at liberty to act as he pleased with the independent Sultan of an unconquered island, but the Governor knew that from the day Sulu was placed under the Spanish flag Captain Northwood had invariably counselled the Sultan and his followers to submit to the inevitable and to obey the behests of the Spanish Government.

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The Governor finally retorted: "Well, you may go to Tiana's to-night, but you are under observation. And let me tell you"—he shouted as his wrath re-kindled—"if I hear of your steamer going to Maimbong, I will have the place bombarded from the sea by our gunboats in the harbour, and I will have it attacked from the land side also, and give all Maimbong over to the flames. If I find there has been any treachery on your part I will not confiscate your ship—I will sink her! Now go! Good night!"

When Northwood got to Tiana's he found that excellent Chinaman in a state of great agitation.

"What have you been doing, *Tuan* Northwood? All the cargo-boats have been sent away from alongside the *Snowdrop* and the ship is under arrest. The guards have been doubled and to-morrow the ship is to be searched from end to end. If any contraband of war is found, it will be bad for me, but very bad indeed for you!"

Northwood talked over the situation very quietly indeed with Tiana. He assured the Capitan China that no contraband of war could possibly be found on board of the *Snowdrop*. He admitted his folly in going to Maimbong, a thing which Tiana, dead to the sporting point of view, could not possibly understand. Finally he charged Tiana with the task of interviewing the Governor early next morning, and insisted that he must put everything straight. For the Capitan China was a power in Jolo, and, moreover, one of the most persuasive and diplomatic persons in existence. The next morning the invaluable Tiana had everything cleared up most satisfactorily. A most minute search of the *Snowdrop* had done nothing more than to establish her character as a harmless trading vessel. It all ended in the Governor sending an aide-de-camp to invite Northwood to dinner and to listen to the music afterwards.

After all, the loading of the *Snowdrop* was but little delayed by this storm in a teacup, albeit Captain Bull

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and Mr. Nipper professed to be considerably agitated thereby, and were highly indignant when Northwood simply sneered at them for being a pair of nervous fools. The Jolo cargo being all in, Tiana came on board as a passenger, and the *Snowdrop* steamed to the little but beautiful island of Siassi, where there was a quantity of pearl-shell waiting shipment. There was a diminutive but handy little jetty at Siassi to which the *Snowdrop* made fast.

The *Snowdrop* was the first steamer, with the exception of one of General Urrutia's gunboats, which had ever called at the forgotten little island, and the excitement caused by her arrival intense. There was a small Chinese settlement on the island and some rather extensive native *kampongs*. The Chinese waxed wealthy by the simple process of letting the natives dive for the pearl shell, buying it from them for next to nothing, and selling what they bought at a modest profit of a thousand per cent. or thereabouts. It was an agreeable and lucrative life.

The Sulu pearl is exceedingly beautiful, while the shell fished in these seas is of the finest quality and exceedingly valuable. The Siassi merchants had some lovely pearls, but directly Northwood tried to purchase some the values soared up above the most fashionable prices of Paris or London. Tiana would not allow Northwood to make a solitary purchase. He said that if he had sent one of his men across in a canoe the day before, he could have bought a whole lot of pearls at any sort of a price. So the greedy Chinamen missed the chance of a lifetime.

If Northwood could buy no pearls, Tiana had managed the pearl-shell business all right, and the cargo having been loaded, the *Snowdrop* sailed for Zamboanga, the nearest port of the vast and magnificent island of Mindanao.

Zamboanga itself was at that time an extensive but shabby, untidy port, fringed with the usual Chinese quarter and native *kampongs*. The Spaniards, however, had put

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up some rather handsome buildings, and their squares and gardens added greatly to the appearance of the town.

There was a considerable garrison at Zamboanga, under General Jaramillo, and there was a little naval establishment, managed by Señor Ferrer. Both these gentlemen, on opening the letters of introduction given to Northwood by General Urrutia, received him with every kindness and hospitality.

In the conventual seclusion of Jolo and Siassi Northwood could hear nothing of the actual state of the Philippines, but he had now got into a more open atmosphere, where men were in touch with the affairs of the great outside world. There was an element of acute crisis in the air, and a general feeling of uneasiness and of impending catastrophe. The Aguinaldo affair and certain executions at Manila were being discussed in all directions. The *insurrectos* were organizing and increasing in numbers rapidly. General Jaramillo was very bitter about the movements of a British steamer called the *Charterhouse*, which was cruising about the Philippines supplying the *insurrectos* with arms and ammunition at enormous prices. The General said there were committees in Manila, Hong-Kong and Singapore, organizing the armaments of the rebels. The General named an Englishman called Bray as the active agent of the foreigners engaged in fomenting rebellion in the Philippines, who personally distributed the contraband of war loaded in the British port of Singapore. But the real head of the whole movement, he said, so far as the foreigners were concerned, was Rounsevelle Wildman, a United States official at Hong-Kong. It was bad enough that a British adventurer such as Bray should procure arms for the Filipinos for the sake of an exorbitant profit, but what was to be said of the action of an official representing the United States in one of the most important ports of the world, in organizing an armed rebellion in the territory of a friendly power?

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Northwood knew something of the *Charterhouse*, an old steamer of considerable size but no great value, which was owned by a Singapore syndicate of no great repute. He had also met Rounsevelle Wildman in Singapore, and had heard some very queer stories about him. There were many accusations later against him and his administration of Filipino funds; and when he finally left Hong-Kong for San Francisco, he was said to be the possessor of a large fortune. His ship was wrecked just at the end of her voyage and the unfortunate man was drowned, so that he benefited nothing by his intrigues, whatever they may have been.

There were many exceedingly disgraceful features about the revolutionary movement and the war in the Philippines, as succeeding pages will show.

While the *Snowdrop* loaded merrily with beautiful copra, and other Mindanao produce, an important piece of business was put through. The Capitan China of Zamboanga was Tiana's brother-in-law, another fine type of Chinaman, possessing a very strong local influence. An informal meeting took place, at which General Jaramillo, Northwood and the two Chinamen were present. The trade was discussed from various points of view, and finally it was decided that, as a small steamer to act as a tender to the *Snowdrop* would greatly facilitate the development of business, Northwood should find such a vessel at an early date.

Everything being now settled, the *Snowdrop* sailed on her homeward voyage a full ship. Northwood himself landed at Labuan, and sent the *Snowdrop* to Singapore.

Many a time, during hot, sleepless nights in Labuan, did he revolve in his mind the tangled politico-commercial web of Philippine affairs. Finally he came to the conclusion that as long as he stuck to Sulu, Siassi and Zamboanga he would keep clear of the revolutionary maelstrom which threatened to work so much mischief to

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commerce. These were Moro countries, and the insurrection was being run by Filipinos and a few foreigners. He would, therefore, go ahead with the southern islands of the Philippines, but venture no further.

Labuan itself was progressing in a mild but steady and satisfactory way.

Northwood now got even at last with the abhorred *kongsi* at the mines. His spy brought him in the right information, and this time he took the Resident into his confidence. He had his own body of Sikh police, small in number, but a very much smarter and more efficient lot than the Chartered Company's shabby loafers, who were a disgrace to the very name of Sikh. However, on one sultry night the two forces were combined under the leadership of Mixer, and a secret retreat hidden away in the recesses of an abandoned mine successfully rushed. Eighteen Chinamen in solemn conclave were taken by surprise, handcuffed, sent by special train to Victoria, and quietly put into jail. A whole pile of papers, a veritable arsenal of arms, and a quantity of dynamite stolen from the company's stores were captured. The police also took possession of a collection of secret symbols, badges, and the rest of the mysterious machinery which is part and parcel of that dread thing—a Chinese secret society. The whole business was done without a blow being struck, and almost without a sound being heard. As the handcuffed members of the *kongsi* passed by Northwood, he wondered vaguely how many men had been murdered and hidden away by their orders.

The Resident was jubilant. "When you leave anything to me," was the burden of his song, "see how beautifully it is done. No noise, no floggings and howlings—no nothing, in fact!"

Northwood let Mixer enjoy his triumph unchecked. A short trial amply proved that the eighteen men arrested were the leaders of a secret society, and the whole lot of them were deported, thus relieving Labuan from the

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pressure of a lot of murderous, blackmailing scoundrels, who ought to have been hanged.

But all thoughts of local affairs were suddenly swept away by a mighty explosion in the Far East. The *Maine* had been blown up in Havana harbour, and war was declared between the Americans and the Spaniards. This complicated matters considerably; but, as Northwood foresaw, while things in the Philippines generally were going to rack and ruin, his Moro ports, as he called them, were outside the track of the storm, and for the time being, at least, current events affected them but little.

Then came Admiral Dewey with his fleet, and Manila was closely blockaded. Various cables were cut, communications of all kinds were disorganized, and everything resolved itself into a weltering chaos.

Northwood thought that the time of crisis had arrived when a bold man, instead of seeing his trade ruined, might make a dash for big profits. Those *Charterhouse* people had cleared any amount of money on their illicit trade; why should there not be something handsome done in a perfectly legitimate and honest way? The elements of gain are present in every war; the question was to evolve a scheme for attaining the end in view which should be perfectly clean and straight.

Matters were made plain very suddenly. Northwood was thinking over his plans in his office when a messenger came in with the news that a steamer flying the Spanish colours was entering the port. He went at once to the wharf, where he found the strange steamer coming alongside, and making her lines fast. Just then down came a squad of Mixer's Sikhs, under the command of an Eurasian, who was in turns postmaster, collector of revenue, and colonel of the Chartered Company's lifeguards. They took possession of the wharf and cast off the ropes of the steamer getting alongside, to the vast astonishment of the Spaniards.

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"What the devil do you mean by this? Get off my wharf, confound you!" roared the exasperated Northwood.

Postmaster-Collector-Colonel de Souza stammered out something about a state of war, and that the Resident had given strict orders that there was to be absolutely no communication between the ship and the shore.

"Tell the Resident that he's a condemned fool, with my best love!" retorted Northwood, as he jumped into the Spaniards' gig alongside the wharf and proceeded to get on board.

The Spanish boat was the *Uranus*, belonging to the Compania Maritima of Manila. Her captain was much surprised at the hostile reception accorded to a Spanish merchant steamer in a British port. That the *Uranus* was a merchant steamer was evident, but the captain confided to Northwood that he had urgent despatches to be cabled to Madrid without delay.

Northwood said that he would attend to this important matter, but had barely taken possession of the despatches when Mr. Postmaster, etc., etc., de Souza broke in at the head of half a dozen of the Chartered Company's dilapidated Sikhs, and told Northwood that the Resident's orders were that the *Uranus* must clear out of Labuan harbour at once.

"Certainly, Mr.—I really don't know what to call you. Do you mind taking that funny sword of yours out of the road. I didn't want you to fall over it—never mind! Kindly tell the Resident that the *Uranus* cannot leave until she has coaled; she burned her last ounce of coal coming to Labuan. Please convey my kindest respects to the Resident!"

De Souza picked up his unfamiliar sword, and holding it at arm's length to prevent it from getting between his legs, went ashore to report to his chief.

Northwood advised Captain Galisteo to unship the cylinder covers and generally to make his engine-room

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look as if it were all to pieces, and rode off to the telegraph station with his despatches, which were addressed to the Duke of Almodovar at Madrid. The telegram was refused as being a communication from a belligerent, whereupon our hero got pen and ink, added the word "Northwood" to the end of the sheets of paper, and handed it in as his own message. This time it went through. Probably, the superintendent, being an intelligent person, was glad of an excuse to accept a message which added nearly four hundred dollars to his day's receipts.

When Northwood got back to his office, St. Leger told him that Mixer was absolutely furious, and talked of nothing short of arresting the man "who had damned the Resident before his own Sikhs." It was no secret that Mixer had sent a gigantic telegram to the Governor of Singapore, detailing the whole affair and asking for instructions.

"That's all right," said Northwood. "We don't know much about international law in Labuan, but I don't suppose Mixer has any right to treat the *Uranus* as a hostile ship. The dear old chap seems to think that Great Britain has somehow gone to war with Spain; he has got the whole thing mixed up with the Spanish Armada!"

Early next morning the great man went on board the *Uranus* himself to order her out of Labuan waters *instantly*. Captain Galisteo received him most courteously, and promised to leave Labuan directly he could move his ship. The Spaniard then showed the astonished Resident through a skylight an engine-room which was a scene of chaos. A dozen Spaniards were polishing and oiling and hammering at all sorts of disconnected machinery. There had been an accident—however, it was hoped to repair the damage very shortly.

Just then another Spanish steamer was signalled, the *Saturnus*, of the same company as the *Uranus*. Mixer, perfectly blue with rage, stamped off to Northwood's offices, where he expressed himself in the most outrageous

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terms. In the middle of the row, however, an orderly came in with a telegram for the Resident, which the worthy man had no sooner read than he let his face down several holes. Jamming the message into his pocket, he strode off without saying another word. No doubt it was the Governor of Singapore's reply and not of a nature agreeable to the Resident.

The *Saturnus* had come in with more despatches. On taking these to the telegraph office, Northwood received a bulky telegram, which some official in Madrid had had the sense to address to him personally. The *Saturnus'* despatches were again forwarded over his signature.

No sooner had the Resident left the *Uranus* than a sudden transformation took place in her engine-room. Cylinder-covers were clapped on, everything else put in order, and steam raised. It was late in the evening before Northwood got on board of her with the Madrid despatches. Under cover of the darkness two hundred tons of coal were whipped into the bunkers or left piled up on deck by picked gangs of smart coolies, and the *Uranus* departed as mysteriously as she came.

During the coaling operations Captain Galisteo gave Northwood the right information. According to him rifles and ammunition were of no use to the Spaniards, who had all they wanted of that kind of thing. A supply of dynamite for mining purposes would no doubt be paid for at an enormous price. But, urged Galisteo, what will be still more welcome to the Spanish generals are supplies of food for their garrisons. The *insurrectos* are capturing or destroying all provisions coming in from the interior, and the Americans are masters of the sea. A cargo of flour, rice, potatoes, beans, tinned provisions, and such things as gin, cheap claret, and other luxuries would be a godsend to the garrisons, and perhaps save them from capitulation or a worse fate at the hands of the *insurrectos*.

The next morning De Souza appeared before North-

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wood in the character of Harbour Master, to complain that the *Uranus* had disappeared without entering or clearing, offences punishable under such-and-such clauses of a blue paper placed on the table. Northwood paid the fines, remarking that, considering the way in which the captain of the *Uranus* had been hounded out of the port, it was not astonishing that he had not waited for his papers. De Souza pocketed his fines and trotted off with them to the Treasury, delighted with his morning's work.

That night the *Saturnus* was coaled and despatched in the same way as the *Uranus*. Northwood paid the fines again to De Souza, who asked with a genial smile if any more Spanish boats were coming. The Labuan Treasury was most thankful for such welcome contributions.

"My dear Harbour Master, if you are content, so am I. I am charging the Spaniards a bit extra for their coals, and a suitable agency fee. If I could only get the *Neptunus*, the *Mercurius*, or whatever the Spaniards call the rest of their boats—there is quite a fleet of them, I am told—my company would be in some danger of paying a dividend. And take my tip, fine every one of them when they come along. The Spaniards won't mind it a bit!"

Northwood now made up his mind to go to Singapore to arrange about loading the *Snowdrop* and chartering an extra steamer. Fortunately, one of the regular boats was just starting, by which he took his passage, leaving orders for the *Snowdrop* to proceed to Singapore directly she arrived at Labuan, where she was due in a couple of days.

Richard Piggott opposed Northwood's plans. He said the Spaniards were a beggarly, bankrupt lot, who would not pay a cent for anything they bought. Northwood called on Señor Marinas, the Spanish Consul, who gave him every possible encouragement. As for funds, the Consul showed him that he had a letter of credit

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on the Hong-Kong and Shanghai Bank for no less than eighty thousand pounds, and assured him that the Spanish generals in the Philippines were amply supplied with money. He offered to pay a lump sum down if required. This cleared up the financial side of the adventure, but Piggott was still obstructive, and after much unpleasantness the matter was cabled to London. The reply came that the Philippine venture was authorized, provided the *Snowdrop* did not go further north than four degrees, as no insurance could be effected on either ship or cargo beyond that point. A glance at the map showed that this degree of latitude included the Moro ports, and that was, in Northwood's judgment, good enough. He drew a sum from the Spanish Consul and started buying his cargo. Accounts were to be finally settled with the generals on the spot, with whom prices and all other details would be arranged.

As soon as the *Snowdrop* arrived her cargo was simply waltzed into her, day and night. Northwood was lucky enough to pick up a perfectly lovely little steamer called the *Leonora*, which could carry one hundred and twenty tons of cargo and steam twelve knots easily. He was most unfortunate, however, in allowing himself to be persuaded by the owners to retain the services of their skipper. Had he known what Captain Bolter would be like, he would have "fired" him without a moment's remorse.

The *Snowdrop* and *Leonora* sailed together, both fully loaded. There was no dynamite on board either of them, Northwood having made up his mind to have nothing to do with such dangerous stuff, no matter what the profit might be.

When Northwood arrived at Labuan he was amazed to find no less than six Spanish steamers lying in the harbour at their anchors. No sooner had the *Snowdrop* got to her berth than six excited Spanish captains came on board in a body to greet Northwood with an enthusiasm which knew no bounds. They insisted on entertaining him to a regular banquet on board of one of their

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steamers, and rendered him no small service by giving him one of their best officers as a pilot.

These ships had been sent to Labuan to get out of the way of the American cruisers, but they had orders to keep up steam the whole time so as to be ready for any emergency. This, of course, meant burning a lot of coal, besides what was required for their requirements at sea—a most satisfactory business.

Northwood had a hasty look into matters at his office, and as soon as the *Snowdrop* and the *Leonora* had finished their coaling and provisioning, they left on their cruise in the Philippines, the Spaniards dipping their flags, blowing their steam whistles and cheering vociferously as the two ships put out to sea.

CHAPTER XXXVII

THE WAR IN THE PHILIPPINES

ON arrival at Sulu, great was Northwood's surprise to find a handsome yacht flying the American flag in the harbour. The Spanish colours, however, still floated over the walls of Jolo, so the whole thing was a mystery. There was but little time for reflection, however, for the *Snowdrop* was instantly boarded by an officer, who said the Governor wanted to see him immediately.

Our hero found the worthy General in a state of feverish excitement. What *noticias* had Northwood brought? What news of the war? General Urrutia had received despatches stating that Admiral Dewey's ships had been sunk, and that a Spanish fleet had bombarded Key West! Was it true?

Northwood, knowing that the Governor would be anxious for news, had brought a file of newspapers with him, which, alas! told a different tale. It was pitiable to see this brave old soldier's despair as he realized how false were the stories which had been sent to him *officially*.

Northwood certainly did a larger trade than usual at Jolo. The supplies from Manila had failed; the commissariat department was glad to have a certain quantity of flour and other things at handsome prices, and Tiana laid in a good stock. But, after all, the garrison of Sulu was small and was supplied out of the *Leonora*, leaving the cargo of the *Snowdrop* untouched.

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The yacht in the harbour was the *Tolna*, the property of an Austrian nobleman, who flew the American flag as a compliment to his wife, whom he had married in the United States. As Northwood was crossing the plaza, he met a handsome young fellow, beautifully got up as a yachtsman, who introduced himself as Count Festetics de Tolna, the owner of the yacht *Tolna*, which had so mystified Northwood in the morning. He said he was going for a cruise in Borneo waters, and would be glad to have a chart of the coast. Northwood invited him to tiffin on board the *Snowdrop*, where he could get all he wanted from Captain Bull. The Count accepted the invitation cordially and Northwood took him off in his boat to the steamer.

The noble stranger said that he had sailed his yacht from San Francisco to Sulu. He had run into Manila Bay, but in spite of his star-spangled banner and his American bride, he had been ordered away before he had time to come to anchor. He stated that he had tried to run into Ilo-ilo, but had been stopped by American guard-boats and again ordered away as he was entering the channel. He was very pleasant, very grateful for the charts and sailing directions he got, and insisted that Northwood should visit his yacht and be presented to the Countess. The yacht proved to be a regular beauty, while the Countess was both charming and excessively pretty. Before he left the *Tolna* she took an opportunity of slipping a letter addressed to San Francisco into Northwood's hand, and asked him to post it the first time he had a chance. As Northwood left the yacht he ruminated a bit. It was evidently a case of American money marrying a foreign title. In later years he came across a copy of the *New York Herald* in Paris, in which something was announced, under a heading in very large print, of the matrimonial troubles of the fair and charming countess.

This accidental meeting with the Count was destined,

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however, to add to Northwood's perplexities at a very early date.

Next morning Tiana told Northwood that he would like to sail in the *Snowdrop* with two or three of his assistants. To this Northwood gladly assented. Tiana next advised him to secure the services of a Spanish gentleman named Torrejon as his secretary for the cruise. As Tiana's advice was always good, it was promptly accepted, and Señor Torrejon, soon affectionately known as "Pepe," joined the staff.

Northwood had now quite an *etat major* on board: Don Antonio de Aralucea, the Spanish officer acting as pilot, Mr. Secretary Torrejon, and his confidential adviser, the Capitan China Tiana, with his clerks.

This magnificence had to be paid for by some little personal inconvenience. The passenger accommodation of the *Snowdrop* was limited, and by the time cabins were provided for all these people there was none left for Northwood himself. However, he got over this little difficulty much as his father would have done, that is to say, he arranged to sleep on the table on the poop, and to wash and dress in the bath-room. These were his quarters for the rest of the voyage.

On arriving at Zamboanga, Northwood immediately called on General Jaramillo, who received him with the utmost cordiality. Northwood had confidently expected that the garrison at Zamboanga would require the whole of the cargo in the *Snowdrop* and some sixty tons of sundries still left in the *Leonora*—about sixteen hundred tons in all—but, though the Zamboanga garrison was a large one, the rice-crop grown in the mountains was just coming in, and there was an abundant supply of cattle available. The General was delighted to take fair quantities of kerosene, wine, gin, and such-like things, but Rangoon rice and American flour were of no use to him. Northwood groaned over his ignorance of the fact that hill rice was grown in Mindanao and

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that the island appeared to be positively thick with cattle.

"Why this sadness?" asked the General. "You have but to go to Ilo-ilo, where General de los Rios, commanding a garrison of twenty thousand men, is hemmed in by the *insurrectos*, and terribly short of supplies, which, alas! I cannot give because I have not a single steamer at my disposal. I beg, urge, *command* you to go to Ilo-ilo! Go, my friend! You will be well rewarded!"

"But," objected Northwood, "Ilo-ilo is already in the hands of the Americans!"

General Jaramillo turned pale. "Where did you get that news from?" he said sharply.

Northwood related the story of his interview with the Count.

"Lies! Nonsense!" rapped out the General. "That yacht was here a fortnight ago on her way to Jolo, and it is nearly a week since he gave you that news. Do you mean to say that, if the Americans had captured Ilo-ilo three weeks ago, their ships would not be at Zamboanga long before this? Where are they? We treated the Count and Countess with every courtesy, although their yacht flew our enemy's flag, but naturally we watched them very carefully, in case this yachting expedition might cover a cunning espionage. I swear to you that the *Tolna* had no clearance papers from Ilo-ilo, and she must have had them if she had been there! That Count must have some reason for preventing you from going to Ilo-ilo. But, of course, you will go there!"

The General's brow clouded as he thought that he had undoubtedly let one of the enemy's spies slip through his fingers.

Just then Ferrer came in, eager to know whether Northwood had brought the engine-parts and boiler-tubes so urgently needed to make the flotilla fit to go to sea. Yes, everything necessary had been brought and would be landed shortly.

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This was good news indeed, and the two Spaniards overwhelmed Northwood with their thanks. The all-important question of Ilo-ilo now cropped up again, with renewed interest.

"Of course," said Ferrer, "you will go there?"

"What is the latitude of Ilo-ilo?" asked Northwood.

There was a brief reference to a map and the answer came: *Eleven degrees North!* Seven degrees beyond the point at which all insurance ceased on ship and cargo! And that in seas where the lighthouses no longer gave their warning rays at night, and all the beacons and buoys were shifted into wrong positions so as to tempt the American captains to put their ships on the rocks.

Northwood tried in vain to explain his position. Talk of insurance policies and a vanishing-point, and of mysterious directors in London, was incomprehensible to Jaramillo and Ferrer. Northwood had his ships and the necessary supplies, so why would he not go to Ilo-ilo?

The Spaniards grew suspicious and gloomy. Evidently the American yacht got on their nerves again. Was it a spying expedition, and had Northwood been bought? Otherwise his attitude was inexplicable.

With a violent effort General Jaramillo said: "You will dine with me to-night, my friend, and bring me a favourable answer."

Thereupon Northwood left the General's presence, thoroughly understanding that unless he went to Ilo-ilo he would be branded as an American agent and had better quit the Philippines at the earliest moment possible. If he sent the *Snowdrop* back to Singapore with all her cargo in her, the whole affair would result in a frightful loss, and the *Leonora* charter would pile it up steep.

Northwood went on board the *Snowdrop* and called the members of his little council together. They all sat at the table on the poop-deck while the risks of the adventure were explained. Every one of them—Captain Bull,

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Aralucea, Torrejon and Tiana—enthusiastically voted for going to Ilo-ilo.

"All right!" said Northwood. "That settles the matter. I needn't ask you to be very careful, Captain Bull, and no doubt Aralucea will keep a bright look-out. If the Americans capture us, we need not worry about our immediate future, the whole lot of us will be attended to by the Americans. But if the *Snowdrop* is put on a reef or comes to grief in any way, I, for one, do *not* go back to Singapore. If this ship piles up I'm going to start a farm in the Philippines. The rest of you can do as you please. Now, Captain Bull, if you will send for Mr. Nipper with the manifests, Tiana and I will make out the cargo arrangements. We have no time to lose."

That evening Northwood, got up in full dress, from white tie to varnished shoes, weighed in at General Jaramillo's head-quarters, together with Torrejon. The General had made a gala night of it, and had invited a number of officers with their wives and daughters to meet his English friend. Northwood was introduced to a number of most delightful personages, and then Jaramillo and Ferrer ran him into a corner and said: "You are, of course, going to Ilo-ilo?"

"Certainly!" was the reply.

The two Spaniards were radiant, and our hero heard them describing him on all sides as a real *caballero* and a "gentleman *inglès*." The ladies found that he had an air of distinction. Later, when the champagne "foamed in the glasses" as the fashionable papers say, and he found himself responding to the toasts in his honour, he could not help wondering what sort of "swarry" it would have been if he had said "No!" to Jaramillo and Ferrer in that little corner.

The entertainment having come to an end, and the next two days having been devoted to the landing of the machinery and other cargo, Northwood, before he got ready to start, went on board the *Leonora* and gave

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Captain Bolter his clear and emphatic orders in writing :

1. He was on no account to go North of Zamboanga, the point at which his insurance on ship and cargo ceased. The *Leonora* being a new and costly ship, Northwood did not desire that his company should pay for her if she was wrecked so much as one mile beyond the limit of four degrees North.

2. Subject to the foregoing, Captain Bolter was to implicitly obey the orders of the Capitan China of Zamboanga. Jolo was to be the depôt.

With the usual exhortations as to carefulness and economy, Northwood said good-bye to the master of the *Leonora*, after having received his reiterated assurances that his orders would be obeyed to the letter. The very next day, however, Captain Bolter, who was no end of a sportsman, went off on a cruise of his own to the forbidden North. Nobody knows to this day exactly where the *Leonora* went. She was lost sight of for some weeks, during which Captain Bolter enjoyed himself much, and no doubt made money, which, however, he did not live to expend in its entirety.

Ferrer came to see Northwood off, and also to present General Jaramillo's compliments. Despatches for the Governor-General of the Visayas were confided to his care, and Ferrer again thanked him for enabling him to equip his flotilla for active service. Alas ! if they had only known it at the time, there was but small cause for congratulation. Poor Ferrer had no sooner got his craft into fighting trim than the Americans appeared off Zamboanga and captured every one of them ! However, Northwood had been well paid for his services before he left Zamboanga that day.

The voyage of the *Snowdrop* through forbidden waters to the island of Panay was attended by lovely weather.

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She entered the channel of Ilo-ilo at daybreak, and Northwood, noting Araluca at the wheel, felt sure that the lean and wiry Biscayan would make no mistakes. There was happily no sign of American ships being in the vicinity. Evidently the Count's story was only "a yarn."

Shortly afterwards the *Snowdrop* arrived safely in the port of Ilo-ilo and was at once boarded by officers and *carabineros*. The Spaniards were truly surprised to see a British vessel coming into Ilo-ilo. The *Snowdrop* was the only ship in that great port. All the other steamers, of whatever nationality they might be, had hastened to safer places. There was not even a Spanish steamer there. The desolation of the port struck Northwood with something of a chill. There was a constant sound of firing in the distance. A Spanish officer told Torrejon that the *insurrectos* were attacking the place in force, and that the dreaded Americans might be expected at any moment. As soon as Manila fell, Ilo-ilo would be bombarded beyond a doubt, for since the blockade of Manila, the capital of the great island of Panay had become the seat of the Spanish Government in the Philippines.

Pending orders from the Governor-General, to whom Northwood had sent Torrejon with General Jaramillo's despatches, Northwood had a look at Ilo-ilo, and thought it a most dreary-looking place. It was of great extent, but that was all that could be said about it. The country was flat and uninteresting, and the river looked very much like a muddy canal. Great masses of iron-roofed warehouses certainly added no attraction to the scene.

Torrejon soon returned with a Spanish *aide-de-camp*. The Governor-General desired to see Northwood at once. Taking Torrejon and Tiana with him, he went ashore, accompanied by the Spanish officer, and the whole party drove off to head-quarters in carriages provided for them. They were taken through fine, broad streets, bordered by spacious and handsome houses, but there was an air of desolation and silence over the whole city.

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The man who at that time practically held the post of Spanish Viceroy in the Philippines, General de los Rios, proved to be a handsome and commanding person, with beautiful manners. He was dressed in a very simple blue-and-white uniform, but the star on his breast indicated an officer of rank. He told Northwood that the generals in the south wrote of him in the highest terms and thanked him especially for transmitting the telegraphic despatches to Madrid. He then desired to know what supplies had arrived by the British steamer, and was greatly pleased on hearing in general terms of what they consisted. He said that, as there was great scarcity of food, he would take over the entire cargo with the exception of such portion as he was compelled to send to Iligan, where the garrison was in urgent need of supplies. The Governor-General then had a short conversation with Tiana, who turned out to be an old acquaintance.

Northwood suggested that Torrejon and Tiana should settle all details with the commissariat department and ventured to suggest that he would be glad to leave Ilo-ilo as soon as possible. Torrejon and Tiana thereupon left to expedite matters, while the Governor-General retained Northwood by placing his hand on the Englishman's shoulder.

Just then the sound of artillery and rifle fire at no great distance brisked up to such an extent as to suggest that some crisis had arrived in the battle which was being fought, but the Spaniard took not the slightest notice of what was going on, and, of course, Northwood followed his example.

The thought, however, passed through his mind, that but for the contraband of war landed in such quantities by the *Charterhouse* there would not be heavy fighting that day in the immediate vicinity of Ilo-ilo. The gentry of the gun-running trade are naturally persons who do not care about the butcher's bill resulting from their operations. What does it matter to them how many men

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are killed and wounded by the rifles and cartridges they sell in thousands at fabulous profits?

The Spanish Viceroy, however, soon drew his attention to his own immediate concerns.

"Listen!" he said. "I particularly want you to take the Conde de Villámar to Cebu, and you will then go to Iligan. I will send for the Conde at once."

Noticing Northwood's blank looks, the General said: "You will not meet any American ships. Manila has not fallen yet, and until then you are quite safe. If you wish, I will give you a permit to call at certain islands where there are no custom houses or garrisons, and which are strictly forbidden to foreign flags. At these islands there are immense quantities of hemp, which you can get very cheaply indeed—your own price, in fact. Hemp is excessively dear in Europe, as no shipments have been made for a long time. You see that I wish to assist you in every way in my power."

Just then General the Conde de Villámar entered the room. He was a most distinguished-looking man, but appeared to be in a delicate state of health. Yet Northwood heard later in the day that this soft-spoken invalid was noted for his terrible severity to the rebels. He was going to Cebu because there was work for him there!

The Conde took it for granted that the *Snowdrop* was going to Cebu. Might he take his horses and carriage with him? His *aide-de-camp*, orderlies and servants might also be permitted to embark, he trusted. Northwood naturally replied in the affirmative, and since he had to do it, did it with a good grace. The Conde said he was delighted with his courtesy. He added that he was a poor invalid, who lived on milk alone, which he would take with him, so that Northwood would please excuse him if he did not attend the ship's table. He had heard from Tiana that the *Snowdrop* would be ready to sail at noon the next day, an hour which he trusted would be

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convenient for Northwood. So saying, "the Terror of Panay" bowed himself out of the room.

Northwood, in his turn, took his leave of General de los Rios. He found Torrejon and Tiana waiting for him in the ante-chamber. They had been expeditious, and had closed with the Spanish commissaries at prices which Northwood would have blushed so much as to mention. They had a long talk about the promised permit to visit the hemp islands. Such a thing had never been allowed before, but General de los Rios was all-powerful. Northwood would doubtless find all the hemp he wanted at Bai-bai or Maligbok, and there would be any amount of money in the business. But, as the *Leonora* would doubtless have brought a lot of cargo to Jolo for transhipment to Singapore, Tiana begged that at least one hold should be reserved for part of it, and to this reasonable request Northwood promptly assented.

Tiana then announced that he intended remaining at Ilo-ilo, where he had many relatives, friends and business interests. He begged that Northwood would allow the Capitan China of Ilo-ilo to entertain him that evening, an invitation duly accepted. It turned out to be a splendid entertainment.

Next morning he went ashore to say good-bye to General de los Rios. The great man first of all told him that the rebels had suffered a very severe defeat the previous day. The mere fact that there were no more sounds of firing amply confirmed this news. Northwood offered his congratulations, and wondered privately how many poor devils had been killed within the last twenty-four hours and what was the number of prisoners executed.

The Governor-General then said he trusted that Northwood would favour him by accepting the post of Agente Consular de España at Labuan. This honorary but onerous appointment could not be refused and was therefore gratefully accepted.

Finally, General de los Rios said he hoped to confer

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a Spanish decoration in acknowledgment of Northwood's distinguished services. Our hero afterwards heard from the General's *aide-de-camp* that it was intended to give him the order of Carlos Tercero, but amidst the horrors of the final crash such a matter was, naturally enough, overlooked.

The interview being ended, Northwood hurried off to his ship. As he got alongside he found to his consternation that her decks were crammed from end to end with troops. Getting on board, he found the Terror of Panay seated comfortably in a nice deck-chair, taking sips of milk out of a silver cup adorned with an engraved coronet. The Conde professed to be overjoyed at Northwood's arrival, was very anxious to know when the *Snowdrop* would sail, but hadn't a word to say about a casual regiment which happened somehow to have come on board. Captain Bull didn't take things quite so easily. "What's this 'ere!" he exclaimed. "I don't mind a joke myself, but if the Yankees meet us with this little lot on board they'll blow us all to hell! I shan't sail until they're landed if I'm——" (Here came an unprintable peroration about many things, and winding up with discursive statements about Spaniards.)

"We can't chuck a regiment on shore if we tried!" retorted Northwood. "Sail with a white tablecloth nailed to your masthead if you like, but get out of this. It's not a long run to Cebu, and the quickest way out of this thing is to get there as soon as possible. Clear out for Cebu this minute! These are my orders, Captain Bull."

That was final; Captain Bull went growling to the bridge, and a few minutes later the *Snowdrop* was on her way to Cebu.

The Terror of Panay evidently realized what the row was about, because he followed its episodes with undisguised anxiety. When the *Snowdrop* got under way, he beamed benignly on Northwood, as he sipped his milk from his goblet, and said: "gentle-man—gentle-man"

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in honied tones. Apparently he did not know another word of English.

The Terror chatted gaily with Northwood of many things during the short voyage, but he never mentioned that thumping detachment of troops; and was stone-blind to their presence on board the ship. Nor did Northwood think it worth while to mention the fact that the upper and 'tween decks of the *Snowdrop* were packed and wedged up with Spanish soldiers. But he got hold of Torreon, and gave him private instructions as to a certain bill to be made out at hotel prices.

Really the Spaniards managed these things very badly. Here were all sorts of military operations checked and garrisons left to starve for want of transports, while a whole fleet of fine Spanish steamers were lying idle in Labuan harbour. One solitary British boat had to do the business. Northwood murmured something to himself about "British pluck," and having patted himself on the back (metaphorically, of course), in the real British fat-headed way, went to sleep on the table aft.

Cebu, capital of the island of the same name, being reached in safety, General Conde de Villamar suddenly woke up to the fact that there were some soldiers on board. Directly he had buckled on his sword he seemed another man altogether. Alert, brisk in his bearing, his orders were sharp and to the point. His officers and men seemed to have a very lively respect for their general, and when he told them to do a thing they simply hustled themselves to do it.

The Terror then took his leave of Northwood with much ceremony and many compliments. Our hero was every thing from a "gentle-man" to *una muy fina persona*. He countered with assurances of regret that the honour of travelling with the illustrious Conde was destined to be terminated so soon. These complimentary speeches were accompanied by repeated bows, and they clasped each other's right hands at least a dozen times.

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"Look at this 'ere!" said Captain Bull disgustedly to Mr. Nipper. "Ain't it enough to make a cat sick, let alone a man? Come and have a gin sling along of me."

Cebu, unlike Ilo-ilo, is an interesting and beautiful place, but on that lovely morning it was a scene of ruin and desolation. There had been some very hard fighting. The rebels, attacking in great force, captured the Escolta, or trading quarter. While they were busy looting the extensive district, the *Don Juan de Austria* suddenly appeared on the scene, and the Spanish gunners, calmly choosing their own range, opened a deadly fire on the place. The rebels, completely taken by surprise, retreated in the wildest disorder into the open country, where they were cut up by bodies of cavalry which had been kept in readiness amongst the hills. The *insurrectos* had fallen into a cleverly planned and fatal trap. The Escolta, however, formerly the busy mart of Cebu and swarming with traders, was now a heap of shattered and roofless ruins, silent and deserted. How thoroughly and systematically the place had been looted was shown by the large number of fractured and empty steel safes lying about in all directions. Taken all round, there had been some singularly expensive fighting in Cebu.

Leaving Torrejon to attend to the purely Spanish part of the business, Northwood set to work on the hemp proposition. This particular trade was practically in the hands of two or three large mercantile houses, and Northwood found it advisable to negotiate with one of the British firms of Cebu. He accordingly called on Messrs. Smith and Co., a firm well known to the Golconda Company. Their manager was very polite, but was emphatic on the point that if Northwood intended to buy hemp for his own account he must count on the active opposition of the Cebu houses, whose principal object was to keep this trade in their own hands.

"Take one of our young fellows with you, have a look at Cebu, and come back to lunch with us. We shall then

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SPANISH TROOPS AT CEBU DURING THE WAR.

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have something to say to you which I hope will suit you as well as ourselves. Mr. Gubbins, take Mr. Northwood round to see the ruins of the Escolta and something of Cebu, but mind you bring him back in time for lunch."

Thus spoke Mr. Kingsley, the manager of Smith and Co. Mr. Gubbins was an Irishman; an amusing companion, who had much to say about the perilous adventures of the British residents of Cebu while the rebels held the town, and during the attack of the *Don Juan de Austria*.

On the way back to the office Gubbins said: "You must make terms with us or you will have us all against you. We can't have a total stranger butting into the hemp trade. Once you start in you may stay there, and that don't suit!"

"Pretty warm thing, the hemp trade, isn't it?" asked Northwood.

"Well! it's an awful gambling thing, and you've got to *know* hemp thoroughly or you'll get let in most frightfully. You can't do anything in hemp just now without *metallico* and I don't suppose you've got much of that. We are all dreadfully short of *metallico*—hardly a silver dollar to be seen. The banks and everybody else who have any coin are sitting on it, and those beasts of hemp-growers won't look at anything else just now. No use offering them bank-notes or bills on London. Rothschild and Snooks are all one to-day in this part of the world!"

"But that is where I come in, Mr. Gubbins. I've got lots of *metallico* on board. The Spanish generals have paid me in silver coin!"

Mr. Gubbins stopped and whistled: "My aunt!" he said; "but you *are* a hot 'un! I wonder what Kingsley will say to this. Well, he'll have to buy your *metallico* and pay you by a draft on London."

"Thank you awfully, Mr. Gubbins, but suppose I prefer hemp to paper!"

"It's lunch time!" said Gubbins.

So it was, and a very pleasant time, too. It was a real

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treat to sit down with a lot of good, hearty Englishmen once more and have a little chat with them.

After lunch everyone adjourned to the office, and the battle commenced. Northwood did not want to speculate in hemp, an article of which he knew little. Nothing would suit him better than to get rid of his large stock of silver coin which he did not want to carry a mile further. Smith and Co.'s paper he knew to be perfectly good, and much safer to carry than a pile of silver. But he had the steamer, the privilege of trading to the hemp islands, and a large sum in *metallico* urgently wanted in the trade. If the Cebu people wanted all he had, they would have to pay him for it.

Kingsley, representing his own and other houses, desired to treat the matter on a purely freight basis. Smith and Co. were to have the steamer, permit, and hard cash for their own use, in return for which they would pay Northwood a freight of so much per bale to Singapore, where the hemp would be transhipped to London.

"Exactly so," said Northwood. "But how much per bale?"

Kingsley named a rate which Northwood promptly refused to consider. He quoted a figure which multiplied Kingsley's rate exactly five times. Kingsley said with a weary sigh that it was all off, and half rose from his seat; the others coughed uncomfortably. Gubbins alone smiled a sad smile, and tapped his forehead mournfully to indicate that Northwood was the unhappy victim of a mental disease.

"All right!" said Northwood sharply. "I will not detain you long, but just listen to me for another minute. I have with me a Spanish gentleman named Torrejon, who is now settling accounts with the Spanish pay-master. His father grows and trades in hemp in Sulu and Mindanao. If you reject my offer, Torrejon and I go trading in the islands, and if we happen to break up your 'ring,' you will have yourselves to thank for it. My rate is a high

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one—very high indeed, if you like—but not so high as you can easily afford to pay by a great deal. I have *all* the cards in my hand this time, and if you wish me to do so I shall play my hand. Will you accept my offer? No! I will not reduce it by one peseta! Do you accept my offer or not?"

A buzz went round the table, and for about five minutes eager consultations took place. Northwood saw how things were going at a glance and busied himself with a short calculation: one bale at so many dollars—five bales=one ton=so many dollars per ton. Supposing he got twelve hundred tons into his ship, leaving space for three cargoes of the *Leonora*. Total—so much! A royal freight, such as the old *Snowdrop* had never earned since she was launched some eighteen years ago!

At last Kingsley said: "Very well, Mr. Northwood, we take your offer. We much prefer to remain on friendly terms with you and settle things amicably."

There were still many important points to decide. Smith and Co. were to have the right to send a representative with the *Snowdrop* to take charge of the specie on board and to load the hemp. Northwood was to sign an agreement binding himself not to interfere directly or indirectly with the hemp-trade during the war. Finally, all contracts were to be signed on behalf of the Golconda Company, whom they knew. They did not care whether the *Snowdrop* belonged to the Borneo Planting and Mining Co. or not; they knew nothing of that concern, and did not recognize it in any way. The irrepressible Gubbins said that they might just as well sign a contract with his friend Snooks of London.

"I suppose," said Kingsley, "you have authority to sign for the Golconda Company?" To which Northwood replied in the affirmative.

There was much to arrange, and as it was decided to despatch the *Snowdrop* at three p.m. next day, there was none too much time to spare.

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It was now five p.m. and Kingsley, regretting that he had not the time to go about with Northwood, suggested that Gubbins and Balpin should take him for a drive to Guadelupe, as it was such a lovely evening. Northwood would, of course, return to dine and sleep.

The drive to Guadelupe, Smith and Co.'s country estate, was a really delicious experience. Northwood revelled in the fine old churches and ancient buildings on the way; in the endless vistas of charming landscape; and in the magnificent trees to be seen on every side. But many blackened ruins of villages and harried farms and plantations attested the recent passage of rebel and Spanish troops.

Guadelupe was a beautiful old mansion situated in a lovely park; a most delightful residence, which had to be abandoned at the time because it was not safe to live there. Bands of *insurrectos* and of marauding scoundrels prowled about the country after sundown pillaging defenceless people, who were happy if they escaped with their lives. So Guadelupe had had every bit of furniture taken out of it, and was left empty and dismantled until better times.

Northwood spent a jolly evening with his hospitable friends, and slept in a large, cool room, of which the windows let in a very pretty and subdued light next morning. They were glazed with small pearl-shells ground thin instead of glass!

After a few busy hours at the office, Northwood invited Smith and Co.'s staff to tiffin on board the *Snowdrop* and to see Gubbins off on his voyage; for none other than Mr. Gubbins had been selected to represent the charterers' interest during the cruise.

After a very cheery and pleasant tiffin, and many wishes for the success of the cruise, the guests went on shore and the *Snowdrop* put out to sea, with Mr. Gubbins installed in the cabin lately occupied by Tiana.

The *Snowdrop* arrived off Iligan at daybreak, and found

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an exposed and awkward roadstead, with strong currents racing in various directions. Captain Bull sent for Northwood to come on the bridge. He said he could not get any decent holding-ground, and hoped that the ship would not be detained at Iligan a minute more than was necessary.

"All right!" said Northwood. "Have a boat put in the water, and I'll go ashore with Torrejon at once!"

No sooner had the pair landed at the pier when they were immediately put under a strong guard and marched off to General Buell's head-quarters. The sounds of heavy firing close at hand were very distinct. They saw a regiment marching to the front. The men looked starved and sullen, and the officers haggard. General Buell received his visitors with great cordiality, once he had mastered their credentials. He admitted that he was terribly short of supplies. In reply to Northwood's representations about the position of his steamer, the General said that Iligan was a bad roadstead, especially towards evening, when a nasty sea was often running. He added that he had plenty of *cascos* (cargo-boats), and that Northwood could have as many soldiers as he wanted to handle the cargo. "I think you will find my men glad enough to assist you!"

So Torrejon was set to work on his familiar task, while General Buell insisted that Northwood should be his guest as long as he remained in Iligan. Directly the garrison knew that the strange ship had brought them a supply of *comestibles* their joy was unbounded. Many hands made light work, the cargo was all handy stuff, and Northwood saw through his binoculars that it was being walked into the *cascos* fast, and that the *Snowdrop* would be an empty ship some time that afternoon.

General Buell entertained Northwood to a perfectly wonderful midday meal, at which several officers and ladies were present. Evidently the last of everything, down to the final bottle of wine, had been pressed into the service of this astonishing display of hospitality. But no

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bread or biscuits. The satisfaction amongst the ladies, as well as the men, when they heard that Northwood's heaven-sent steamer had brought them such things as flour, beans and potatoes was something intense. Even the General's eyes glittered for a moment when he heard that there were even some cases of hams to be landed, and a goodly quantity of the preserved meats which were *not* wanted at Zamboanga. There was a bouquet of flowers on the table of such magnificence that Northwood could not refrain from admiring it. Later in the afternoon he found it lying in the stern-sheets of his boat.

Presently Torrejon turned up with his papers. All was in order and the cases of silver coin received in payment of the balance due were now being put into Northwood's boat. It was high time to be off, as the sky was getting overcast and the sea was rising. Amid the heartfelt thanks of General Buell and his staff Northwood made his escape, and raced off to his boat. He noticed nothing just for the moment, except the lovely bouquet of flowers placed in the boat by his Spanish friends. When, however, the boat pushed off he saw, to his anxiety, that she sat very deep in the water. The *Snowdrop* had no proper lifeboat in her equipment, but Captain Bull had luckily given Northwood the largest boat he had, an old sort of galley, which pulled eight oars and was fitted with a few air-tight cases. By the time this venerable craft had got half-way to the *Snowdrop* things were getting serious. The seas were beginning to lap over her sides, and it looked very much as if she were going to the bottom. Apart from the loss of the specie, it would need a stout swimmer to live in those waters.

"Shall we throw the specie overboard?" asked Torrejon tranquilly.

"I wish we could!" answered Northwood; "but to attempt to move heavy weights in this boat will but hasten the catastrophe!"

Gripping his yoke-lines hard, Northwood took her off



ZAMBOANGA.

TO THE
AMERICAN

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the direct course for the *Snowdrop* and put her head on to the sea, in which she wallowed without making much progress, although his Malay sailors tugged at their oars like demons. Northwood could not understand why Captain Bull did not stand in and pick up the boat. On the contrary the *Snowdrop* was actually steaming very slowly away from her!

At last, when the last vestige of hope was fading away and the sailors could hardly pull another stroke, the *Snowdrop* came round and stood in towards the shore. Five minutes afterwards Northwood ran his sinking boat alongside of the steamer. A rope whirled through the air which was caught and made fast. The falls were next dropped from the ship and hooked, the cases of dollars were handed up the companion ladder rapidly, and finally Northwood, soaking wet, got out of the boat (which was now stove in and would never swim again), and stood on the deck of the steamer.

He hailed Captain Bull on the bridge and shouted: "What the devil do you mean, sir, by not standing in to pick up our boat when you saw us in difficulties? Did you intend our boat to sink?"

Captain Bull said nothing and turned his head the other way. Having no cabin of his own, Northwood went into the saloon to change his wet things, and there beheld Mr. Gubbins fast asleep on a settee, the wise man!

Ten minutes later Northwood sent for Torrejon, who came in with a big bundle of papers.

"Well, Pepe, how did you get on at Iligan?"

"Very well," said the Spaniard with his usual coolness. "In the first place, I got fifteen dollars per case for one thousand cases of gin we landed. That makes fifteen thousand dollars."

"I thought we had landed all our gin at Ilo-ilo. However, since the stuff has been landed it must be there! I remember I paid four dollars seventy-five cents for the gin

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I bought, so there is a decent profit there. Go ahead, Pepe!"

The Spaniard went ahead. So many thousand bags of flour at so much, so many hundred sacks of beans, so many baskets of potatoes at such a price, and so on. As Pepe drawled out the details of a singularly profitable day's work Northwood was jotting down certain figures in pencil, of which the result was particularly gratifying to him.

"Really, Pepe," he said, "you have done wonders. Quite apart from the profit made, you have no idea what a pleasure it is to me to think that we have relieved an intolerable position at Iligan. Just fancy that our friends—and those pretty ladies especially—can at last have bread and potatoes and all sorts of things, of which they have been deprived. Why, even the common soldiers will have enough to eat. It's really a great thing we have done, Pepe!"

Here Northwood's edifying discourse was cut short by a perfect hurricane of laughter which filled the saloon. Looking round to see from what temerarious person these indecent sounds proceeded, Northwood was surprised to see Mr. Gubbins rocking himself to and fro in a paroxysm of mirth and evidently very wide awake. Northwood had entirely forgotten about Gubbins asleep on the settee.

"My sister's cat!" shrieked the young man, who affected a peculiar jargon of his own; "but you *are* a thick 'un, Mister Northwood! If you aren't enough to give a hyena the hump, I don't know who is! Here in a few hours you clear one thousand pounds—one thousand pounds sterling, mark you—on a thousand cases of gin; you sell potatoes and beans at their weight in silver, and then you go and jaw to poor Pepe about how glad you are to feed those pretty ladies and the common soldier! Haw! haw! haw!"

"I thought you knew, Mr. Gubbins," said Northwood severely, "that it is not considered the right thing to

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overhear a private conversation as you have done. Amongst gentlemen such conduct"

"Oh, Lord! amongst gentlemen! Just hearken to him! What price gin?"

More yells of vulgar laughter followed. There was evidently nothing to be done with such a ribald personage, so Northwood went on deck.

Gubbins, who was a very sociable creature, drifted off to Captain Bull's spacious cabin amidships and retailed the foregoing conversation to him as a huge joke. To his surprise the captain saw nothing to laugh at. On the contrary, he knitted his eyebrows, took some notes on paper and forthwith went on the bridge to see Mr. Nipper, who was then navigating the ship. The disappointed Gubbins couldn't make it out at all. Nobody on board the *Snowdrop* seemed to have any sense of humour!

The next morning the *Snowdrop* arrived at Bai-bai, the first of the hemp islands forbidden to ordinary vessels. It was a pretty island. Here were no custom houses or troops, and apparently no authority of any kind. The island seemed tranquil and prosperous. A number of solid buildings and warehouses indicated trade of some kind. Gubbins pressed Northwood to go on shore with him.

"I have no business there," objected our hero. "It's your turn now!"

"Oh, never mind! Barney Gubbins has no secrets. Come along wid ye."

Bai-bai seemed to belong to a wizened little monkey of a *mestizo*, who proved an impossible nut to crack. His warehouses were bursting with hemp, but he wasn't a seller. When he was offered *metallico* he didn't believe it was there, and would not go on board to see. Finally he wanted one hundred pounds a ton for his hemp, as he believed that that was now the price in Europe. It must be more, he argued, or a steamer would not come to Bai-bai after hemp. As the actual price in London was

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about forty pounds, it was clear that there was "nothing doing" at Bai-bai.

But little time was lost, and that same evening the *Snowdrop* anchored off Maligbok, which seemed to be a perfectly charming island. In the foreground was an old fortress, which had been converted by the monks into a church. The mixture of bastion, battlements and church windows, surmounted by a steeple, was most picturesque. The scene reflected in the clear waters of Maligbok was sheer enchantment.

Northwood insisted that Gubbins should go ashore alone. He said he was tired of both Gubbins and hemp, and wanted to enjoy the scenery. The unabashed Irishman dropped into the gig alongside and started for the pier unattended.

In a short time he returned with the news that Maligbok was "Paradise Regained," and that hemp was cheap! Don Fernando de Escaño invited Northwood and Torrejon to join his family at dinner without delay. There was nothing for it but to follow Gubbins, who had a great deal to say for himself. "I'm awfully glad I came with you. Don Fernando is no end of a duke. He owns two small coasting steamers, steam-presses for baling hemp, warehouses, plantations, a couple of perfectly lovely daughters and about ten thousand tons of hemp, dear boy! He and the monks run the whole island between them, and we might do much worse than marry the daughters and settle down here like gentlemen. Well, here we are!" he concluded.

They had now reached a large and brilliantly-lit building standing within a spacious courtyard, in which some half-dozen armed men who wore no uniform mounted guard. Ushered into a room of really noble proportions, the deputation from the *Snowdrop* was most graciously received by Don Fernando, his wife, his daughters and his attendant monks.

Don Fernando, like his neighbour of Bai-bai, was a half-

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breed, but one of another type altogether—a fine, compact, old man, with a kindly and intelligent face. Barney Gubbins, who had a decidedly good nose for business, started buying hemp at once. The women and the monks had as much to say on the subject as Don Fernando himself, but terms were soon arranged at a price so much lower than anything anticipated that Northwood was inclined to sit down and howl at being left out of such a good thing. Barney had the greatest difficulty in suppressing his indecent joy over the deal of his life. A messenger was sent to Captain Bull with a note from Northwood desiring him to berth the *Snowdrop* at Escaño's wharf at five o'clock next morning, and the business of the day was done.

After a splendid supper there was some music and a little dancing. The young ladies in their secluded island seldom had the chance of flirting with three cavaliers from the outside world, and certainly made the most of their opportunity. It was some hour in the morning before Don Fernando's guests regained their ship, and it seemed to them that they had just got to sleep when they were aroused by the rattling of chains and the usual infernal racket of getting a steamer alongside a wharf.

Loading the hemp was started right away, and Barney Gubbins was all over the place giving his orders while Northwood looked on idly, except when he occasionally urged his supercargo to get every bale into the ship that was possible.

"There is no hurry; take time to stow carefully and well," were his orders.

Presently a little troop of pretty damsels came on board the steamer bearing massive silver dishes laden with flowers, fruit, fresh fish and poultry. The contents of the dishes were a present from Don Fernando repeated every morning.

"A very praiseworthy and delicate attention!" said Gubbins. "I call this a nice place—a very nice place indeed."

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During the forenoon, however, the weather clouded over, and it was soon raining so heavily that all work on the cargo had to be stopped. Northwood took this rare opportunity of reading a book, and had just settled himself comfortably in the saloon, when Captain Bull desired to have a talk with him.

"I've heerd from Mr. Gubbins, sir, as how that thousand cases of gin landed at Iligan fetched fifteen dollars per case. That gin happens to be *mine*, sir, a little speculation of my hown, and I'd be glad of your horder on the company for fifteen thousand dollars to square the account like!"

"Oh, indeed, Captain Bull; and so you've been speculating. May I ask if those one thousand cases were manifested?"

"No, sir."

"Did you pay any freight on them?"

"No, sir."

"All right! I'll make out a freight note at ten dollars per case, and hand you a cheque for the balance, say five thousand dollars."

"What's this here?" gasped the captain. "You don't mean to say you are going to charge me ten dollars a case. I never heerd of such a freight! It'll ruin us!"

"Freights are high just now, Captain Bull, and we've run great risks with your stuff. If the customs had discovered that we had a thousand cases over our manifest on board, the fines would have come to more than the value of our ship. I think you know what Spanish customs regulations are like. The penalties for the slightest infraction are something awful. I suppose Mr. Nipper and Mr. McKillop are in this thing too? Don't put yourself in their hands, Captain Bull, or you'll regret it. It won't ruin you to get your money back again. By the way, you are getting more for your gin than I paid for mine. How much did you pay for your lot?"

"Five dollars a case."

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"Well, I bought mine at four dollars seventy-five cents. Here's your freight note and your cheque. Next time I hear of anything of this kind everybody concerned gets the sack straight off!"

The chapfallen skipper left the saloon looking as if he was going to have a fit.

Gubbins, who had been listening as usual, said: "My aunt! but you've scored off the skipper and his syndicate heavily this time. Quite right, too! The mate told me yesterday that they've been trading on their own all along the line in potatoes and beans and things without your spotting it. They have made a whole pot of money, and now they want you to make them a present of ten thousand dollars! It isn't much, is it?"

"Talking of pots of money, you robber!" rejoined Northwood. "I calculate that your friends are going to make a cool twenty-five thousand pounds on this little trip to Maligbok, and I get nothing out of it!"

"Hold on, Mr. Pirate!" yelled Gubbins. "You've got a frantic freight. The way you played Torrejon on us wants a lot of beating. Good old Pepe! Well, we're all in the same boat, and it's no good pot calling the kettle black. Tell you what, Northwood, my daisy! We'll have a bottle of the bubbly wine and a drop of angostura bitters, to wash away all unkindness. Let's drink Success to Crime!"

Thereupon Gubbins very handsomely stood Northwood a bottle of his own champagne.

"By the way," added Gubbins, "I got it from the old lady that there is going to be no end of a *fiesta* the night before we sail. It appears that they are a little short of champagne for the great guns like ourselves, and of gin for the commoner guests; the entire village is to be invited in our honour. It's going to be a sort of feudal gathering—a sight worth seeing! Shall we send a few cases of champagne and gin ashore to our charming and hospitable friends? It's astonishing, by the way, how

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fond both Spaniards and Filipinos are of gin. You wouldn't think it, but *ginebra* is a great go in the Philippines ! ”

“ The invaluable Pepe shall attend to this at once, ” answered Northwood. So Torrejon was sent for, and undertook this delicate commission with his usual tranquillity.

That night they were being entertained by Don Fernando in his usual whole-souled way, when Northwood, who had been looking at certain distant and delightful hills, asked the half-breed if he could not go on a shooting expedition into the interior while the hemp was being loaded. To his surprise Don Fernando seemed much put out at this suggestion, and Pepe said to him in French : “ Don't ask to go inland. *It is not safe !* ”

Northwood immediately shut up, and Don Fernando found it convenient to talk to others of his numerous guests.

So there was a seamy side to life even in Paradise Regained !

The next morning Don Fernando's two coasting steamers, the *Victoria* and *Maria*, named after his pretty daughters, anchored off Maligbok with fresh supplies of hemp. No wonder that their owner was content to get rid of some of his surplus stocks of that valuable fibre. The captains of these boats were Spaniards, fine hearty fellows, not at all inclined to let Torrejon and Gubbins have it all their own way with the ladies. It was a most friendly rivalry, however, which led the way to outrageous but harmless flirtations and the wildest gaiety imaginable.

It took some time to load the *Snowdrop* at Maligbok. The No. 1 hold was reserved for the Moro ports. Gubbins tried in vain to get possession of that hold at rates far beyond the contract for the twelve hundred tons, but Northwood had promised the space to Tiana, and no money could buy it. Wearied with the importunities of Gubbins, he finally said : “ If you are so keen on it, let us

Map of California



A SCENE IN THE PHILIPPINES.

to call
attention

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take a deck cargo of hemp at the old rate at shipper's risk, same to be expressed on bills of lading as per usual. We can cover up the hemp with tarpaulins and old sails, and if we carry our fine weather with us to Singapore you will be all right. Arrange with Captain Bull what cargo he will take on deck. He is the master of the ship, and I shan't interfere with him as to what deck-load he can safely carry!"

"Righto!" exclaimed Gubbins cheerily, as he raced off to see the captain. Evidently he had squared the skipper and his syndicate. The lot of them started in to build up a superstructure of hemp which reached nearly to the top of the funnel. Then they roofed it in with tarpaulins and old sails, until the *Snowdrop* began to look the most picturesque old thing afloat.

The *Snowdrop* had now been four days at Maligbok, and her loading being at last completed she was fixed to sail at daylight next morning. The night of the *fiesta* had arrived. Including Northwood, Pepe, Gubbins, Captain Bull and his officers, the *Snowdrops* mustered nine all told, and arrayed in their "glad rags," as the Americans have it, they marched off in a body to Don Fernando's mansion.

The scene was exceedingly gay and full of colour. As the *Snowdrops* arrived, a fine band struck up a triumphal march, and they were greeted with immense enthusiasm. The gathering would have made a splendid picture. Amidst a profusion of lights and flowers in the picturesque old hall, the most varied types of people were enjoying themselves without restraint and with an energy unknown to Europe. Some of the native dances were very pretty, and the village lads and lasses warmed to their work with a will. The dark-skinned girls, heedless if their hair came down and floated in splendid masses over their shoulders, danced with flushed cheeks and sparkling eyes, displaying their beautiful figures with reckless freedom. The costumes of all the young women were very light and very *décolletée* according to our ideas. Small doubt that the

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lithe figures and scanty dresses of the lassies led to the downfall of the *Snowdrops* that night.

All went well until shortly after midnight, when Northwood, who was floating delightedly through a waltz with Victoria Escaño, heard suppressed screams followed by roars of laughter. Surmising that Mr. Macphail, the second engineer, the lady's man of the ship *par excellence*, who had already given trouble on the voyage, was up to his tricks, he excused himself to his partner, and went to find the second engineer hauling about a very handsome native girl under the pretext of teaching her to dance a highland schottische. Mr. McKechnie, the second mate, was following his example. Mr. Nipper was dancing a double shuffle of his own, and, wholly unabashed, was hugging his partner like a bear. Captain Bull, too fat to dance, was complicating matters by slapping an indignant monk on the back while he explained to him that the *fiesta* was "mucho bono, old feller!" Mr. McKillop, who was very drunk indeed, was busily stroking an old lady down the back and apparently expecting her to purr. The frantic dame was cursing him heartily, "son of the devil" being the mildest of her expressions; but McKillop never heeded.

Northwood was aghast. The *Snowdrops* had broken loose with a vengeance!

Delivering the wrathful monk out of the hands of his skipper, he said to Captain Bull: "It's time we all got on board. We sail at five o'clock!"

"You can go on board if you like!" retorted Bull very rudely, "but we're enjoyin' ourselves and mean to stop!"

This was flat rebellion. Northwood sought out Torrejon, who seemed on the verge of a very definite proposal to Maria Escaño. Pepe, however, realized the dangers of the situation fast enough. Angry looks were bent on the drunken *Snowdrops*, and sinister whispers were circulating.

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"The *fiesta* ought by rights to continue until dawn," said Pepe, "and it will be very awkward to break up the party so early. How to get your drunken friends on board is not an easy matter."

Don Fernando was consulted and promptly hit upon an excellent way out of the difficulty. At a wave of his hand the band stopped playing. The wily Escaño then announced that as the *Snowdrop* sailed at daylight, the band would play the distinguished guests of the evening on board their ship; all those present would join in the procession, and the *fiesta* would afterwards be renewed until the customary hour.

This suited everybody. The band went out of the hall playing a swinging march. Everybody formed up behind, including the *Snowdrops*, and the rest was a triumphal tramp to the wharf. Captain Bull and the whole of his staff had been handsomely cheated into getting on board their steamer without in the least understanding how the thing was done.

Don Fernando bade an affectionate farewell to Northwood, Torrejon and Gubbins, and then went home with the islanders to keep up the *fiesta* until dawn.

Northwood congratulated himself that all had been so nicely arranged. He was tired out, and was thankful enough to get some rest. His boy Lapis had put his mattress on the table, and was now waiting to see if his master wanted anything more. When Northwood had turned in, Lapis placed a hurricane lantern on the deck, and, having laced up the canvas curtains which cut off the poop-deck from the rest of the ship, went to sleep on his mat in some other corner of the vessel.

It was an understood thing on board the *Snowdrop* that when these curtains were laced Northwood had retired for the night and that his privacy was to be respected by all hands. As he was dropping off to sleep, he was dimly conscious of a racket going on in the engineers' mess-room.

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He heard the strident voice of Macphail shouting: "Let's have some guid whiskies and sodas after all that rotgut stuff on shore, and we'll drink damnation to Mister Northwood!" He heard Captain Bull bellow an approving "'Ear, 'ear!" and then went sound asleep.

Presently he was disturbed by the sounds of footsteps. He woke up and rubbing his eyes said: "Is that you, Gubbins? What do you want?"

"It's no' Gubbins!" roared a stentorian voice. "It's Macphail, an' he's wantin' a little chat with Mister Northwood!"

"Get off the quarter-deck at once, Macphail! You've no business here!"

"Haven't I, indeed!" sneered the other, and so saying he took Northwood's watch and chain from under his pillow and bashed them on the deck. The gold watch went to smithereens.

"What d'ye say to that? Get off that table, and I'll bash ye just the same as that gold watch of yours!"

It was truly a pleasant situation. Northwood sung out for Lapis, who promptly answered his hail.

"Call Captain Bull!" ordered Northwood.

Lapis darted off on his errand, but returned with the answer that the captain was so soundly asleep, that it was impossible to awaken him. "Run away, then, and call the chief officer."

Lapis went and returned with the same reply. It was impossible to wake Mr. Nipper.

During the time that Lapis was trying to arouse the officers of the ship, Macphail, amidst a perfect storm of profanity, disclosed some interesting information. He told Northwood that when his boat was in difficulties in Iligan Bay, the "Old Man" was for standing in to pick it up, but that Mr. Nipper prevented him from doing so. It was not until Nipper realized, after taking a look at the boat through his telescope, that it was laden with cases of dollars in which the syndicate thought they had

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a direct interest that the *Snowdrop* was allowed to stand in shore.

"Ye cheated them fine out of the dollars!" snarled Macphail; "but dollars won't be much use to ye by the time I've done with ye! I'll smash ye inside of five minutes."

Northwood saw that the whole thing was a put-up job, and slid off his table to confront the second engineer.

"I'll give you one last chance, Macphail. Will you go away quietly and let me get to sleep?"

Macphail's answer is purely unprintable.

"All right!" said Northwood. "Put up your dukes and let us have it out!"

"I didna ken ye had so much spunk in ye!" rejoined Macphail, as he put up a pair of hairy fists, one of which suddenly whizzed under Northwood's left ear. Northwood just dodged a blow which would have laid him flat had it caught him. The fight proceeded warily after this opening. Our hero was at a disadvantage, because he did not want to appear a little later with a pair of black eyes, or his nose shifted out of its usual locality. He, therefore, used his hands to take care of his head.

Macphail, who was simply "fighting drunk," and no more, put in a few rib-roasters, which all but knocked his opponent into the middle of next week. When Northwood landed on Macphail, on the other hand, it was like punching a bag of nails or a brick wall. Still, he kept cool until by the light of the hurricane lamp he saw a nasty murderous glint in the second engineer's eye, and realized that the man would have no mercy on him once he got him down. He pulled himself together for the effort which might save his life or from serious injury in any case. Quite unconsciously he had worked his opponent round to the break of the poop. Letting fly with all his remaining strength, he caught Macphail a flush hit on the nose and saw him suddenly disappear!

As a matter of fact, Northwood had knocked him down

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the ladder on to the deck below, and he fell on the iron plates with a nasty sort of crunching sound. Northwood was horrified to think that perhaps he had killed the man, when he was relieved to hear Macphail shouting for help, and screaming that he was smothered in his blood.

Instantly Mr. Nipper was on deck, followed by Captain Bull and McKillop. Here was plenty of assistance for Macphail at a moment's notice. Northwood saw them examining him by the light of a lantern, and heard Captain Bull exclaim that his head was broke, and that he was bleeding like a pig. Nipper was despatched to get some bandages and certain bottles out of the medicine chest, while the other two carried the injured man away. Feeling sore in spirit and battered in body, Northwood once more tried to get some rest, and stretching himself on his mattress was off to sleep at once.

He was roused very shortly afterwards by the noise of the ship leaving the wharf. Captain Bull was starting punctually at five a.m. as arranged. It was a dull, drizzly morning, and Maligbok, which could look so lovely, presented a dreary and depressing aspect. The *Snowdrop* looked like some sort of Noah's Ark under steam, with her deck-load of hemp housed under tarpaulins and canvas.

There was a nasty puddle of blood at the foot of the ladder, which had not been washed up yet. Once the *Snowdrop* had got under way and Maligbok astern of her, Northwood went below into the saloon and sent Lapis for his morning coffee. Presently Mr. Gubbins came slouching along in a pyjama suit, and in the full enjoyment of one of his jokes.

"So we had a slugging match a little while ago," he cried. "I must say you are a treat, a real treat and no error! You screw a thousand pounds out of somebody else's gin on one day, make violent love to Victoria Escaño the next, and put up a fight at three o'clock in the morning with a Scotch engineer and knock the stuffing out of him. It wants some doing does fighting at three a.m.!"

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"Anyhow, you took jolly good care not to show up when I wanted assistance," returned Northwood.

"Not me!" said Barney. "I wouldn't come within range of Macphail's fist for all the hemp in this steamer. Besides, you seem to be the kind of person who can look after himself!"

In reply to an inquiry about Macphail's condition, Barney described him as being very much off colour. "It appears that when you sent Macphail flying, his head struck an angle-iron of some kind, which inflicted a very severe scalp wound. That is the principal damage. However, they've got his head nicely bandaged. He's got a black eye, and he thinks something has happened to one of his ribs. Something *has* undoubtedly happened to his nose, it's all over the place. Looks as if he'd hit a hammer with it; but I suppose you're too much of a sportsman to fight a man with a hammer! Now I come to look at you your knuckles are pretty badly chipped. Hardly surprising, is it?"

One of the first things Macphail did when he got about again was to seek out Northwood and beg his forgiveness.

"I'd been drinking too much, for one thing," he said, "and there was other things I prefer not to tell. Anyway, I'm leavin' as soon as the ship gets back to Singapore!"

Northwood shook him by the hand. "That's all right, Macphail. I think you are doing wisely to leave us, and I've no doubt I can get you another job at once."

As an illustration of the insecurity of life and property in the Philippines the following story is of interest. The *Snowdrop* venture returned such handsome profits that when Gubbins got back to Cebu, Smith and Co. chartered another steamer and sent him in her to Maligbok. Barely had the British steamer arrived there when the place was attacked in great force by the hillmen. Gubbins happened to be on board the *Victoria* when the attack

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was made—so suddenly that everyone was taken by surprise. The unfortunate captain of the *Victoria* was murdered. Gubbins saved his life by jumping overboard and swimming ashore, when he was captured and taken into the interior. A British gunboat was afterwards sent to Maligbok to effect his release. Don Fernando's mansion was burned to the ground and he and his family were carried off to the mountains as prisoners. It is typical of this tragic affair that the leader of the bandits was *Don Fernando's own son!*

The *Snowdrop* made a fine run in calm weather to Zamboanga, where the Capitan China was anxiously awaiting her arrival. The No. 1 hold was promptly filled with pearl shell and copra, and some cargo had to be shut out.

It appeared that the *Leonora* had turned up empty after a long cruise in unknown waters. Captain Bolter had got some coal from Ferrer and was off on another yachting expedition. The Capitan China complained most bitterly that Bolter had brought back a mere fraction of the value of the cargo entrusted to him, and was a perfect calamity of a man from every point of view. Thanks to her captain, the *Leonora* charter would result in a ghastly loss. There was no use in taking the *Snowdrop* to Jolo, so she went into Labuan to coal, and thence to Singapore, where Northwood and Gubbins not only settled up their accounts, but paved the way for some future business.

The arrival of the *Snowdrop* created a sensation in certain official circles in Singapore. The boarding officer made unpleasant remarks, and Lloyd's surveyor, after poking about in the engine-room, said: "Really, Mr. Northwood, you have been running the most awful risks. A mere capful of wind would upset that floating haystack you've brought down from the Philippines, the most dangerous seas in the world, perhaps! As for the engine-room, it's a mere ruin. The boiler stays are absolutely rotten, and your silly old boiler will cast itself loose before you know where you are—and where are you?"

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"In Singapore Harbour!" replied Northwood.

However, he was much too sensible to do otherwise than get round Lloyd's surveyor. "I'll guarantee that the *Snowdrop* is sold to the Americans inside of two months," he said. "Don't condemn the old craft until I've sold her!"

On the distinct understanding that the *Snowdrop* was to be sold at once, and to carry no more deck-cargoes as long as she was under the British flag, the surveyor was with much difficulty persuaded into letting that old iron ruin sail just one more voyage.

Richard Piggott was not exactly cordial. "We heard that the *Snowdrop* was sunk during the bombardment of Ilo-ilo!" he said with his usual brevity.

Northwood, imitating Piggott's style, retorted: "Don't know anything of bombardment of Ilo-ilo. *Snowdrop* not sunk! Now here!"

Piggott flushed angrily as he said: "You deliberately went beyond your limit of four degrees North!"

"Yes, we went off to look after some actual business," answered Northwood icily.

Although his junior did not know it at the moment, Richard Piggott's day was done, and he was recalled to London, where no doubt he rendered an account of his stewardship. And here *exit* Piggott!

Northwood made a grievous mistake in not sacking the *Snowdrop* Syndicate in a body while he had the chance. But the *Snowdrops* had been very submissive and meek of late, and were abundant in their promises of reform if they were given another chance, and he had all his father's dislike to hitting a man when he is down, and kept them all with the exception of Macphail, who resigned, and thankfully accepted the billet of chief engineer on a small coaster which Northwood's influence got for him.

Northwood was a busy man those days, and he was glad enough when, having settled up in Singapore, he was

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able to sail for Labuan. Here he was relieved beyond all measure to find the *Leonora* had arrived there since he left Singapore. Captain Bolter had practically no account to give of himself, but much to say of the glories of Mindanao. He averred that it was a tremendous day's steam up the Rio Grande to reach the central lake of Mindanao, where the Spaniards kept two gunboats cruising around. He said that it was a lovely country and full of wealth, and particularly of cattle, which could be bought for practically nothing. As for certain sums of cash due to the Capitan China of Zamboanga, the Captain proposed to collect them on some future voyage. He beamed on Northwood with his watery blue eyes most engagingly. Northwood wanted to hit the man, but contented himself with telling Bolter that he thought of sending the *Leonora* back to Singapore and handing her back to her owners. The Captain said that would suit him quite well, and thanked Northwood for his kindness, which he said he should never forget. "He was just like his dear old father, he was!"

Northwood rushed into his office and smacked an unoffending tamby across the ear.

Meanwhile events were moving rapidly. Manila had fallen, and Ilo-ilo and Zamboanga were now under the American flag! Northwood pondered over these unwelcome portents and determined to cut the Philippine trade. The British flag was played out in the Philippines, he knew, and the sooner that important fact was taken to heart the better. The star-spangled banner is very beautiful, but it casts a deadly blight on foreign trade. The Americans understand this part of their business remarkably well. Their rough logic rounds up into the simple formula: *Protection is the Best Policy!*

So, sending for Captain Bolter, Northwood ordered him to get up steam at once and be ready for a run to Sulu. He mentioned that he would be a passenger on board the *Leonora* this trip. The Captain put on his



MOROS AT ZAMBOANGA.

no vital
apparatus

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usual smile, and promised to have steam on the *Leonora* in the course of a few hours.

That night Northwood sailed in the *Leonora*. She certainly was a bonnie boat. She waltzed through the water like a witch, so different to a dreary old scrap-heap like the *Snowdrop*. Northwood's soul was sorely troubled and vexed as he thought what a pile of money the *Leonora* might have rolled in if he had fired that blue-eyed skipper the minute he saw the beast !

It was with a sad heart that he steamed for the last time into Sulu. The Spanish flag still drooped lazily over its walls, the American detachment to occupy the place not having yet arrived.

Poor General Urrutia was a perfect wreck. It was pitiable to see him.

Northwood went through the dreary task of settling up accounts with Tiana. Large amounts had to be written off on account of the *Leonora's* deficiencies, but in the end a righteous balance was struck. Northwood then said farewell to one of the finest Chinamen he had ever seen, and went back to Labuan in the *Leonora*.

At Labuan he found cablegrams from Smith and Co., sent *viâ* Singapore, stating that the Americans had occupied Cebu and were short of coal. They offered a simply splendid price for a cargo of Labuan coal and mentioned that they could probably sell the *Snowdrop*. This fitted in exactly. The *Snowdrop* was then in Labuan harbour and stocks of coal were plentiful. The steamer was loaded right away and sent off with a cargo of coal for General Otis. Many and wise were the words addressed to the *Snowdrops* by Northwood as he despatched the steamer, but it was wisdom wasted.

He had word of the arrival of the ship at Cebu, and of the delivery of her cargo. She had been despatched with a half cargo of hemp for transshipment at Singapore, an unexpected windfall.

But Northwood waited, like Sister Anne, for the *Snow-*

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drop. The days passed and weeks fled until he came to the conclusion that she was lost. Still, she was insured all right this time! With the capitulation of Manila and the cessation of hostilities, the "four degrees North clause" became inoperative, both for the *Snowdrop* and *Leonora*.

At last, on one bright morning, Northwood was told that the *Snowdrop* was signalled. "Tell me when she comes alongside the wharf," he answered, being busy with his correspondence. A couple of hours slipped by, when another messenger came in to say that the *Snowdrop* was steaming in dead slow and that something seemed wrong with her.

"Get a launch ready," he ordered. "I'll go off to her at once."

Ten minutes after, he was on board the *Enterprise* and steaming out of the harbour. As he approached the *Snowdrop* and scanned her through his binoculars, he was surprised to see that not a solitary European was on the bridge or anywhere on deck. The steamer was shoving through the water dead slow, and a funereal air seemed to hang over the whole ship.

Northwood's first thought was that the captain and officers had been murdered in the Philippines. The steam launch was run alongside and Northwood skipped up a rope-ladder flung over the side. "Anything wrong?" he anxiously asked the *serang* who met him.

"No," answered the native. "All is well. The *tuan tuan* are down in the saloon dividing the plunder!"

Northwood darted into the saloon, in which he was just as welcome as an exploding bombshell.

As he stood at the entrance there was a general surprise. The *Snowdrops*, sitting round the big dining-table, could scarcely believe their eyes. There was a general gasp! If they were surprised, so was Northwood. There round the dining-table sat the familiar figures of Captain Bull, Mr. Nipper, McKillop and McKechnie.



RUINS OF THE ESCALITA, CEBU, after the bombardment of the insurgents by the Don Juan de Austria, 1898.

To visit
unpublished

The War in the Philippines

Spread out before them on the table were diamonds and rubies, which sparkled in leather cases marked *Levy Hermanos*. Watches and chains, mixed up with crucifixes, chalices, and other church plate and a mitre, were being sorted out by greedy fingers. Lying on the floor were the vestments of an archbishop stiff in gold brocade!

Northwood fixed on Captain Bull. "What does this mean, sir?" he demanded.

"I begs your 'umble pardon, but these is some hodds and hendes we've picked up in these yere Philippines! We 'ave 'ad a real bad time of it, Mister Northwood, wot with one thing and another. Bad weather, and them American customs! They's habsolute thieves, sir! Rob their own grandmother, they would, let alone me!"

Northwood was furious! He talked about thieves to some purpose, and swore that he would have them locked up in Labuan jail that night.

"Perhaps you precious scoundrels will go on deck and take your steamer alongside the wharf! By the way, the whole lot of you are sacked! Swine!"

They scrambled on deck, while Northwood looked over their plunder. He was perfectly staggered! It was like one of the caves of an Arabian Nights story. Amongst other things, he came across a dainty little Filipina's chemisette, on which there showed a great dark brown patch of blood! What did that mean? The whole thing was an absolute mystery. Presently the *Snowdrop* was made fast alongside the wharf, and Northwood walked ashore without another word.

When he got to his office he sent for St. Leger, and telling him what he had seen, asked him to find out how the *Snowdrops* had got their plunder.

"Just drop a few hints that I mean to report the whole thing to the Singapore police and that Mr. Nipper, in particular, is likely to serve a long term in the jail at Pearl's Hill," he suggested. "Pray find out the story of that bloodstained chemisette while you are about it."

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St. Leger, brimful of curiosity about this wonderful fairy-tale, started off at once. He had the knack of making people talk.

Presently he came back with his story. The jewellery, communion-plate, the archbishop's robes and all the rest of the plunder had been bought from American soldiers for some cases of liquor, mostly cheap whisky. Ilo-ilo, especially, had been pillaged to the very bone. The *Snowdrops* had witnessed American soldiers beating gems out of rings, bracelets and brooches, and throwing away the gold mountings as too heavy to carry away with them. The Americans had plundered the cathedral at Ilo-ilo and the Archbishop's palace to some purpose.

The story of the bloodstained chemisette was a simple one. It appears that solitary American soldiers had been stabbed to death by *bolo* men (the *bolo* is the deadly knife of the Philippines), especially after dark. The American commanding officer at Ilo-ilo posted up a notice—in English, be it noted—forbidding the natives to be in the streets after six p.m. under penalty of death. Captain Bull happened to be walking through a street of Ilo-ilo just a few minutes after six p.m., when he saw a pretty *mestiza* coming in his direction. An American soldier on the other side of the street raised his rifle and shot her dead. She fell right into the arms of Captain Bull, who thought he would like to have her bloodstained chemisette as a souvenir of a curious incident, and stripped the warm body of it.

"The Americans are making a complete mess of the thing," St. Leger said. "Everybody is fighting everybody else, and the Yankees are shooting down the lot. As for the discipline of the troops—there is none! The men do what they like and nothing else. They don't worry to salute their officers. At one of the small islands the *Snowdrop* touched at an American detachment had been cut off and exterminated to the last man. The Filipinos sold Nipper their watches and rings and the loot

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which had been re-looted. The *Snowdrops* paid the Americans in whisky and the Filipinos in gin—a jolly fine trade ! ”

“ Really, St. Leger, all this is very interesting. Of course, it’s easy to do a fine trade when you are running somebody else’s steamer free of expense to yourself, and are not too particular in your ideas about loot. Anything else ? ”

“ Well, Bull says that the American customs people, and officials generally, are a thousand times worse than ever the Spaniards were. It’s no longer a matter of having half a dozen native *carabineros* on board who mess with the crew, and a lieutenant in the saloon glad of a present of a ham or a case of claret. The Americans crowd into the saloon, privates and all, and get ‘ ugly ’ unless they are served with the best of everything. And they tell you straight out that they haven’t come out to the Philippines for the benefit of their health. Every ‘ grafter ’ in the United States seems to have landed in the islands, and wants to make his pile right away ! By the way, the *Snowdrops* say they won’t have you calling them thieves and scoundrels. Unless you apologize they will go for you ! ”

Here, no less a person than Mr. Nipper presented himself and forthwith delivered a short speech apparently learnt by rote : “ I have come to tell you, Mr. Northwood, that the captain and officers of the *Snowdrop* consider your language of this mornin’ as offensive and insultin’. Unless you send us a written apology at once, we shall sue you in the Singapore courts for heavy damages on a charge of criminal libel.”

Northwood looked at the man in a way which made him flinch. Then, turning to the Sikh on duty, he said to him : “ *Angkat sama Tuan* ” (Take the gentleman away). “ *Buangsama dia* ” (Bump him about a bit !).

Gholam Singh, who remembered that Mr. Nipper had called him a black pig on a previous occasion, grasped the

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lean and lanky mate by the scrag of his neck and ran him against various brick pillars and projections of sorts, slammed him against one of the Chartered Company's cheap lamp-posts, and finally flung him hatless across the street. Then the Sikh returned and informed his master with becoming gravity that the gentleman had gone.

St. Leger was convulsed with laughter.

"That fellow is at the bottom of the whole mischief!" said Northwood. "I wouldn't mind letting the others off, if I could get at *him*. If I could put him into the dock on a charge of cheating, or something of the kind, I daresay Bull and the rest would have something interesting to say under a smart cross-examination. If you have a chance you might mention to Mr. Nipper what my ideas concerning him happen to be. That was a pretty steep bluff he tried to put up just now, wasn't it?"

"I think's he's gone round to the hotel for a drink. I should rather think he wants one. I'll just see if I can catch him now."

Northwood never saw the mate again. Mr. Nipper left the *Snowdrop* directly she got to Singapore and took the first steamer to Australia.

Northwood had a serious talk with Captain Bull a little later. The skipper of the *Snowdrop* was looking very sallow and unhealthy and was troubled with blood-spitting.

"You had better quit this rotten life, and get away back to Hull," said Northwood, "and be properly treated for that illness. I don't like the look of you at all!"

Bull admitted that he felt very queer, but his avarice had now got a good grip of him and he tried to get terms in consideration of his long service. He wanted a free passage home and six months' half-pay. Northwood cabled to the directors of the B. M. and P. Co., advising the state of Captain Bull's health, and recommended his request being granted. The directors, however, thought

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it cheaper to cable orders dismissing Captain Bull from their service without an allowance of any kind. Northwood regretted what had happened. He again urged upon the sick man the necessity of his going home at once. In any case, the *Snowdrop* would be sold immediately, so that Bull's dismissal did not mean a great deal to him.

The infatuated man went to Singapore, and, instead of taking Northwood's advice, chartered a Chinese-owned steamer to run her on his own account in the Philippines. He was going into the trade just as Northwood was straining every nerve to get out of it in time. He was a very poor business man, and made a shocking mess of his new venture. His chartered boat soon swallowed all the money he had made as skipper of the *Snowdrop* by more than doubtful means. He returned to Labuan from the Philippines on his way to Singapore a broken man.

While at Labuan he was seized with a violent hæmorrhage and died. It was a sad ending. Poor Captain Bull had been a decent man and a good sailor until he got into wrong hands, and was led to his destruction by that will-of-the-wisp idea of making a fortune rapidly.

The *Snowdrop* was in the meantime sold to an American house in Cebu by one of Northwood's colleagues in Singapore. The old packet loaded just one more cargo of coal at Labuan, and was handed over to her new owners, who at once placed her under American colours.

Northwood had done with the Philippines. That chapter of his career was closed. But he had leisure to think of that strange phenomenon, the conquest of the Spanish islands by the Americans and of its results.

The theory that the Spanish Government had any hand in blowing up the *Maine* in Havana harbour was discredited in the minds of men able to form an opinion on the subject. Spain, therefore, was being stripped of her colonies as the result of an accidental explosion of the *Maine's* own magazines.

War being declared, it was natural that the Americans

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should occupy Cuba. It would also have been comprehensible had the Americans blockaded the ports of Spain and marched an army into Madrid. That would have been war as it has always been understood by civilized nations. But what business had the Americans in the Philippines, and what are they doing there now? was the question which puzzled Northwood and perplexes him unto this day. They certainly did not go there for the benefit of the Filipinos, upon whom American intervention brought untold horrors, as the smoking ruins of hundreds of towns and villages and the thousands of corpses of slaughtered men and women abundantly testified. The Americans simply let loose a flood of calamity in the Philippine Islands. All the worst elements of an Asiatic race were let loose amidst indescribable bloodshed and devastation. The ineptitude, the folly and corruption which accompanied the American occupation of the Philippines constitute one of the blackest records which has ever stained the pages of history. Much of the misery wrought in the Philippines was caused by the insane jealousy of the civil authorities against the military. It suited the political crisis of the day to proclaim that there was peace in the Philippines when there was no peace and could be none! The millions of the United States knew, and to this day know, nothing of these things. They were given the Official Version and accepted it in the absence of any other. The commissioners in Manila took extraordinary pains to muzzle the Press and keep things dark. The curious in such matters should read a book written by Mr. Stanley Portal Hyatt, "The Little Brown Brother," and the last chapter of his later book, "The Diary of a Soldier of Fortune." What Mr. Hyatt writes is enough to make any good American sick with shame. He describes how the frantic appeals of the peasantry for protection from the fanatical *pulajanes* were disregarded at Manila, and how American regiments were kept in camp while hordes of bandits were burning and slaughtering

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a few miles away. "A thousand white troops distributed round the coast (of Samar) would have resulted in the saving of fifty thousand lives," writes Mr. Hyatt. But the Official Version did not admit of a state of war, and the Presidential election was near at hand. "So the *tao* (the peasants) were left to their fate. Within the year, nearly a hundred thousand of the natives of Samar perished, and the island was absolutely ruined; but still, the election was won!"

The Philippines can never be other than an insecure and unprofitable possession to their present owners. Let Japan but embark in the easy enterprise of fomenting insurrection in the Philippine and Hawaiian Islands, and her fleets would have but to show themselves to inflict humiliation and defeat upon one of the greatest and finest peoples of the earth, who, however, possess neither an army nor a navy capable of defending their vast and distant conquests against a resolute and well-organized power of whose fighting capacity the world now knows something. Even under the most favourable circumstances the Philippines will always cost the Americans much more than they are worth to them. It is a sheer impossibility to colonize these islands by American methods. Some day the fact will be brought home to our cousins that they are the poorest hands in existence at governing Asiatic millions who are of no possible use to them. That fact might be recognized now!

Why not hand over the Philippines to Great Britain in exchange for her West Indian possessions? The Americans could manage a population of white planters and negroes very well indeed. The West Indies can never prosper under our Free Trade *régime*, and while we have no particular use for these fertile and beautiful islands, they seem to fall naturally within the sphere of American influence. With the markets of the United States thrown freely open to them, a new era of prosperity would dawn in the West Indies and everybody would be happy.

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The Philippines impinge on British territory ; they are encircled by our colonies. With our never-failing genius in this particular direction, we should soon pacify Filipinos and Moros alike, and we should then place the vast riches which the Philippines contain at the disposal of all comers of all nations, instead of keeping them for ourselves, which is our disinterested, idiotic and truly British way of doing things.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

THE END OF THE STORY

THE Liverpool steamer *Abana* arrived at Labuan from the Suez Canal on her way to Vladivostok with a cargo of coal for the Russian fleet. She got alongside the Labuan wharf all right, where she took six hundred tons of bunker coal. She was a big boat and deep loaded, drawing twenty-six feet six inches when she left the wharf. Two hours afterwards she hit what is now down on the chart as the Abana Rock. Incidentally she put an end to Northwood's career in the Far East.

When our hero first saw the *Abana*, he found her lying with her bows buried in a mud-bank over on the Brunei side. Her propeller was high in the air and her engine-room full of water. Her captain and crew had abandoned the ship.

It was a hopeless-looking job. Here was a big ship with six thousand tons of coal in her, cast away on a filthy slimy mudbank on the Brunei shore, with her foreholds and engine-room full of water. She was a valuable ship and her cargo was worth money. What about floating the *Abana*, saving ship and cargo, and sending her to Singapore for repairs? This is a thing worth doing, thought Northwood, and ultimately he got it done. But he would have been much wiser had he left the *Abana* to rust and rot on the sweltering mud-bank where he found her.

He was at the time Lloyd's agent at Labuan, and having sent a long cablegram to Singapore about his idea of saving the *Abana*, started at once to lighten the steamer.

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The *Leonora* was now set to work towing long strings of lighters to the wreck and bringing them back full of the finest Welsh coal. Ever since Northwood had got the *Leonora* under his control she was earning money and making up her losses in an astonishing way. In due course assistance arrived from Singapore in the shape of tugs, pumps and salvage gear of sorts. Lloyd's surveyor at Singapore, the manager of the Tanjong Pagar Dock, and some of his subordinates arrived on the scene. Lloyd's surveyor, sensible man, said it would be much better to leave the *Abana* severely alone. To take the cargo out of her was all right, but he strongly opposed any idea of floating the ship and taking her to Singapore.

Now Northwood was dominated by two ideas. First, the Brunei natives assured him that by the next moon there would be an extraordinary fall of several feet in the tides on that coast, so as to leave the *Abana* dry, when it would be an easy thing to patch up the gaping rent torn by the pinnacle rock, pump her out and float her. Northwood remembered how often his father had told him of the mysterious knowledge the natives had of such phenomena, and that they could prophesy such events with accuracy a long time ahead. He, therefore, accepted the native theory with implicit confidence. Secondly, the dock foreman showed him figures demonstrating that the *Abana* could be salved and repaired for twelve thousand pounds. At a moderate estimate ship and cargo were worth sixty-five thousand pounds.

Northwood had his way, and the salvage operations were started vigorously. What the natives said about the phenomenal fall in the tides turned out to be absolutely true. With great effort the *Abana* was temporarily repaired, floated, and taken to Singapore. But it proved to be a terribly trying and sickly job. Every European employed on this work got very ill and several of the natives died. Fever ran riot amongst them. Northwood, who was continually hastening the work, making

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expeditions up the river to get supplies of fresh water for the pumps and recruit native labour, threw himself so energetically into these operations that he often forgot his meals, and was exposed more than anyone else to the burning sun and the effluvia of the mud-banks and swamps. No sooner had he got the *Abana* away to Singapore than the company's doctor told him he was down with fever and sent him to bed.

It was on Sunday, Christmas Day, 1898, that he broke down. He was then up the river. Captain Bolter should have brought him supplies, but failed to do so, and Northwood and his party had a hungry Christmas. His entries in his diary were brief enough. Here they are :

Tuesday, December 27th, temperature one hundred and four degrees ; ill. Wednesday, December 28th, continue ill. Thursday, December 29th, but also continue work. Friday, December 30th, in bed. Saturday, December 31st, telegrams, etc.

After that he appears to have been unable to make any more entries. But while he could do so, he had reports brought to him, dictated telegrams and letters, and insisted on seeing skippers in his bedroom. These worthy master mariners generally looked on the sick man with much suspicion, puffed strong cigars with a view to keeping off infection, and bolted the first chance they got. Northwood was doing his best to kill himself.

These obscure fevers impart a mania of restlessness to their victims, who will not acknowledge that anything much is the matter with them, and plunge with a sort of frenzy into work which they should leave alone altogether. Irritability is another symptom of these fell diseases.

Northwood struggled frantically to keep himself still at the head of everything in Labuan, but he gradually found his faculties dulled, and finally no longer cared for anything at all. Scarcely anyone but the company's doctor came to see him. He had abandoned his old quarters in the big brick house opposite the wharves,

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since the pilot had come out from home, and should naturally live amongst the shipping. He now lived in a little shack he rented for fifteen dollars per month, a melancholy, rat-infested shanty, all right for a man in robust health, but no place for a sick and fever-stricken creature.

During his days of agony and nights of sleepless horror he would watch the rats running on the bare rafters over his bed. He had scarcely noticed them when he was well, but now he was afraid of them. What if they fell on his bed?

He lived chiefly on milk, of which a kindly Roman Catholic priest brought him a couple of bottles every day. Once he thought he felt a desire for food, and, sending for his cook, told the man to go to the bazaar and get him something nice. Later in the day the cook brought him in a huge piece of salt junk steaming hot and put the reeking mass by Northwood's bed. It nearly killed the patient, but the Chinaman grinned joyously as he bore the dish back in triumph to the kitchen.

Then Northwood was haunted by delirious dreams. Distorted visions of his past life flashed before him. He saw flaming volcanoes and mountainous seas ready to overwhelm him. Again he was dying in the sandy deserts of Annam, or shipwrecked on a coral reef. Sometimes he would dream of a lovely island steeped in all the glory of a moonlit night. Once more he was embracing a beautiful woman who loved him, when she was torn from him, and amidst the blinding flashes of lightning which flamed against a sky of black, he saw her lifeless body floating on the crest of a wave. Oft was that dread vision repeated of a newly-dug grave in the hideous cemetery of Labuan. His parched lips would work in a convulsive effort to cry: "Not there! Any place but that!"

Sometimes in his cool intervals, but very rarely, he would slip off his bed and pace up and down his room.

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On one of these occasions Lapis came to see if his master wanted anything. Seized with an ungovernable fury, he lifted his hand to deal a terrible blow to the lad to whom he had hardly said a cross word in some years. Lapis smiled sadly, and putting forth a very small brown hand, caught his master's wrist and gently forced his right arm to his side. Northwood went back to his bed. He now knew that a mere child was stronger than the man who had knocked out Macphail.

When the *Ranee* came in, it was decided to put the sufferer on board and send him to Singapore. The skipper was very kind, gave up his best cabin, and had a bed made up on the floor of it, as being more comfortable than a bunk. From the moment the *Ranee* sailed until she arrived at Singapore four days afterwards, the unfortunate Northwood was unable to keep down so much as a glass of water. He was the victim of continuous fits of vomiting. He heard the captain say to someone in the saloon: "The poor fellow can't possibly last much longer. I wonder if we shall be able to keep his body until we get to Singapore?"

Mrs. Northwood came off to the *Ranee* to meet her son. The poor lady turned pale as she looked at the thing lying on the floor of the cabin, but she never lost her presence of mind. She saw that he was gently lifted into a boat, and kept her arms round him while he was being driven home. Then she had him carried into her own room and put into bed.

Her son gazed round the light, airy, spacious room; his skeleton fingers felt the soft, spotless sheets, his eyes sought through the windows the smooth, green lawns and banks of flowers in the garden. Then a sort of dreamy delight stole over him as he faintly sniffed the sweet, cool air.

"I don't mind dying here!" he thought. Then the tears rolled down his wasted cheeks as he saw the look in his mother's eyes.

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Presently Dr. Galloway and one of his colleagues were by his bedside. They looked puzzled and hopeless. This was apparently a new disease altogether. The main point for the moment was that unless the patient took some nourishment his death was near at hand.

"What do you think you would fancy?" was the anxious question.

The sick man quietly said: "Turtle soup."

"Why, we have some in the house!" said Mrs. Northwood. "I'll get it heated and bring it at once!"

To the vast astonishment of the medicos their patient lapped up his turtle soup, and settling his head on his pillow, went fast asleep!

This was little short of a miracle. The doctors never expected that he would be able to keep turtle soup down. There might be a chance of saving him, after all!

Dr. Galloway said that a few hours more on board the *Ranee* would certainly have finished his patient, but he also thought that the continuous and violent vomiting from which he had suffered in all probability saved his life.

A few days later the worthy doctor said: "I do believe you have invented an entirely new microbe. I really must examine your blood, and if I'm right, I'll name the microbe after you."

"Shouldn't wonder!" replied Northwood with a feeble grin. "Jolly good microbe, isn't it?" from which it may be inferred that he was getting better.

He gained strength rapidly, albeit he suffered from severe relapses, which gave great anxiety. Still, he made an excellent recovery for the time being, and it was thought that he was quite well enough to take a trip to Hong-Kong. A sea voyage on board a P. and O. mail steamer would set him up a lot. He went to Hong-Kong accordingly, and from there to Swatow, where he raised a draft of perfectly splendid coolies for his beloved Labuan.

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Thence he returned to Singapore, very much the better for his trip.

It did not take him long to discover that things were not going on at all well in Labuan during his absence, so he determined, in spite of his mother's entreaties and his doctor's warnings, to return thither and try to put things right.

The company's people were anything but delighted to have Northwood amongst them once more. If ever a man seemed to be finally disposed of and wiped off the slate it was Northwood, and here he was back again! He was not a popular manager, especially amongst the crowd he had to manage. Perhaps the meanest thing he did, in their eyes, was to import some miles of wire and a complete telephone outfit, which linked up every point of the mines with the instrument on his desk at Victoria. Anything more confoundedly inconvenient could not be imagined! Here was this Lazarus, devoid of any sense of decency, overhauling accounts, ringing up his telephones, and playing the deuce generally, just as things were getting so nice and comfortable!

Northwood finally left Labuan in one of the company's launches for Brooketon, as he was returning to Singapore through the Rajah of Sarawak's territories. His coolies thronged the wharf and exploded thousands of crackers in his honour. The Chinamen seemed to be really very sorry that he was leaving them.

H. H. the Rajah received the visitor at his capital very kindly, and very generously promised to erect a complementary light on the Sarawak coast to form part of a system, of which a first-class flashing light on Kuraman Island should be the centre.

After a very pleasant stay at Kuching Northwood returned to Singapore, where, having squared all his accounts, he now prepared to obey the urgent advice of his doctors to quit the Far East while there was yet time.

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Northwood left Singapore a poor man, practically penniless, in fact. His personal expenses in Labuan and the Philippines had necessarily been small and he had saved a moderate sum, which he lodged in one of the banks, in case his mother might require some money in excess of her income during his absence. That he had no money did not worry him in the slightest, for he was still drawing a salary ample for his requirements, and what more did he want? As for the rest, he was quite easy in his mind. He would soon get well and strong again and return to the Far East, perhaps to take charge of Labuan once more and help to make it a splendid success. That would suit him better than getting rich on his own account.

On this point he was sadly mistaken. He was *not* destined to return to the Far East. His fell malady reappeared in a most virulent form after he got to Russia, with dire and unheard-of complications, necessitating a series of very serious and costly operations, which he could ill afford. For two years, during which his life was a story of acute pain and suffering, such as few mortals have to endure, his courage was put to an almost unendurable strain. More than once his doctors gave him up as a man who had only a few hours longer to live, but he always pulled through. After one perfectly awful operation, his surgeon said to him: "You will have to kill your microbe, or it will kill you!" In the end he killed his microbe, and promptly regained his health and strength.

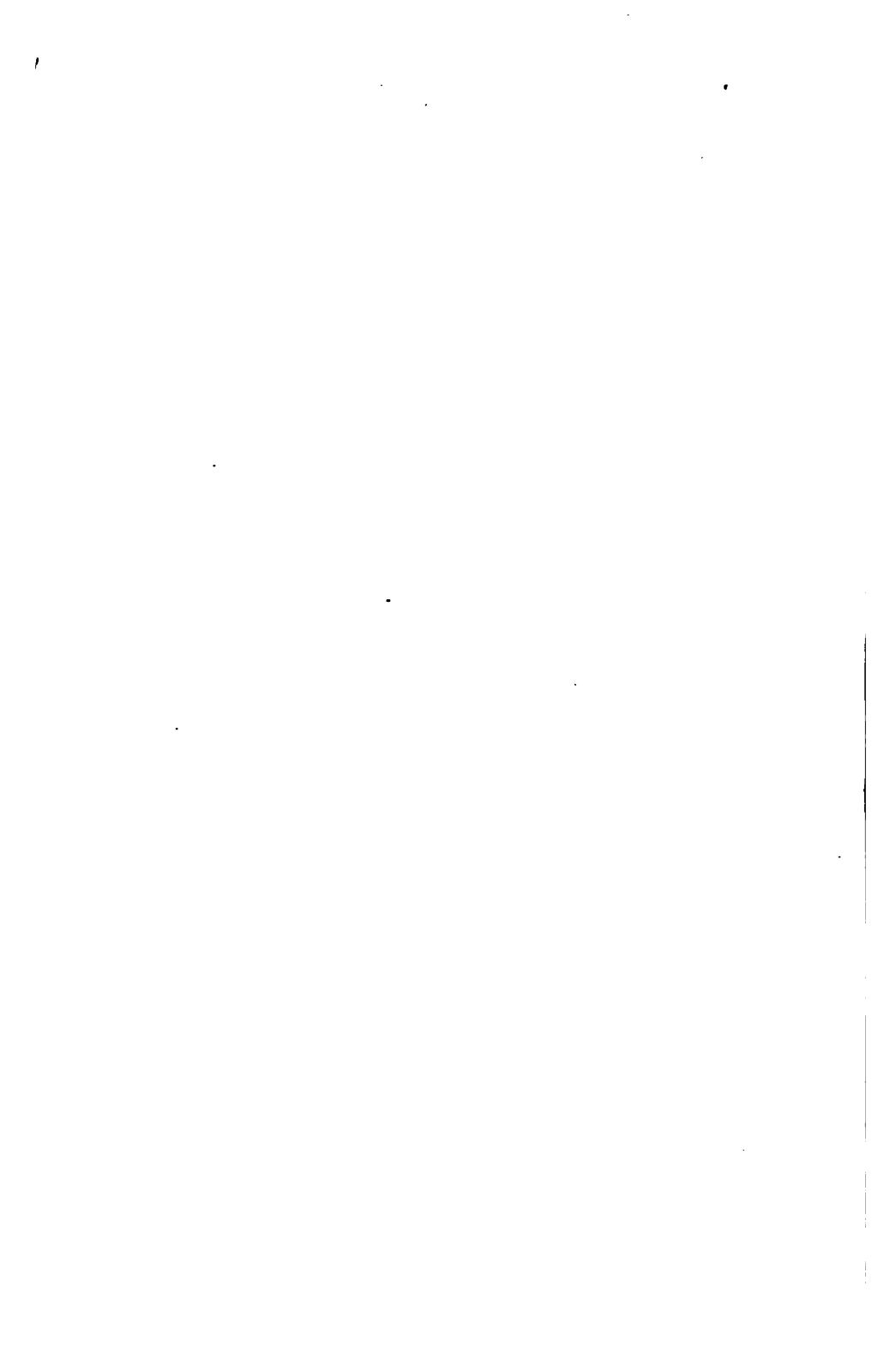
Poor Lapis rendered his master a last service when he took his trunks to the homeward-bound mail steamer. His mother could not trust herself to see him off, so he drove to the wharf alone. But on going on board the mail-boat, he found quite a group of friends waiting to see the last of him. All the Golconda staff were there, from the manager down to the office tambies. For good-fellowship, kind-heartedness, and many other virtues also,

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flourish in the Far East with a luxuriance unknown in colder climes.

At last the usual signal was given for visitors to leave the ship, the gangway was hauled ashore. His friends gave a rousing cheer as the ship steamed away from Singapore, and from that moment Northwood ceased to be one of the Men of the Far East !

THE END





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